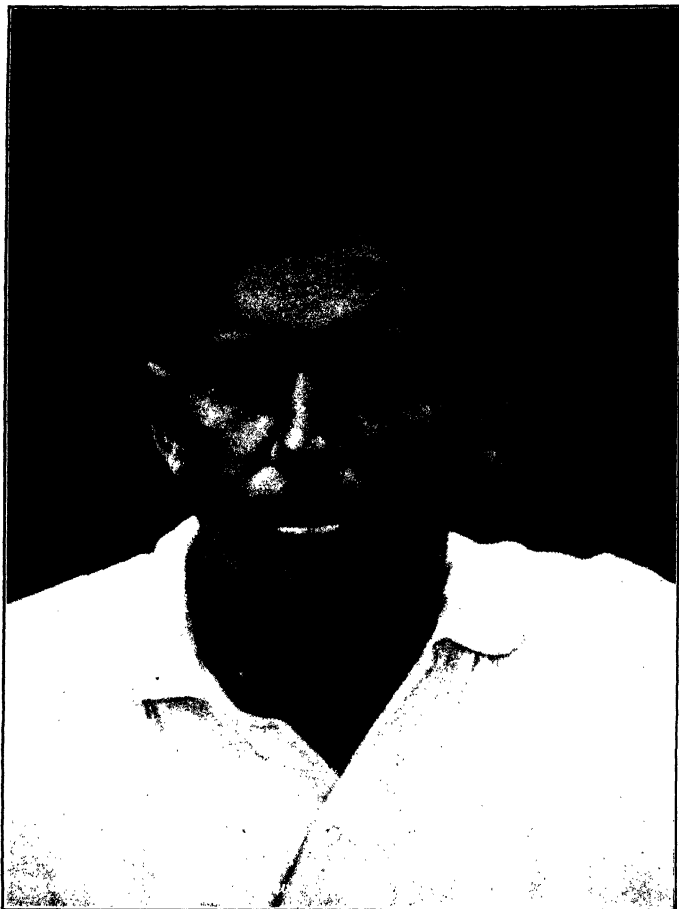


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TENNIS AS I PLAY IT.

MAURICE E. McLOUGHLIN



MAURICE E. MCLOUGHLIN

National Singles Champion 1912, 1913; with T. C. Bundy, National Doubles Champion 1912, 1913, 1914.

TENNIS

AS I PLAY IT

BY

MAURICE E. McLOUGHLIN

PREFACE BY

RICHARD NORRIS WILLIAMS, 2ND,
NATIONAL CHAMPION OF THE UNITED STATES, 1914

ILLUSTRATED WITH
SEVENTY-TWO REPRODUCTIONS
OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN ACTION

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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TO
SIDNEY R. MARVIN
OF SAN FRANCISCO

WHO HAS DONE MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE
TO ENCOURAGE THE YOUNG PLAYERS OF
CALIFORNIA, AND WHOSE TRUE FRIENDSHIP,
GENEROUS PERSONAL INTEREST, AND KINDLY
ENCOURAGEMENT HAVE PLAYED SO PROMINENT
A PART IN MY OWN DEVELOPMENT IN THE GAME.

PREFACE

BY

RICHARD NORRIS WILLIAMS 2ND

National Champion of the United States 1914

What pleases me so much in M. E. McLoughlin's book on tennis is that he shows the reader what he himself does, not only what ought to be done. His idea of tennis is based on the theory: do what is natural, what is born in you; and I do not believe that anybody who has played the game can deny this being the only rule or maxim that stands with no exceptions. People who write books on tennis or try to teach the game seem to get theories into their heads and believe that there is a right way or wrong way for everything, and they try to reorganize your game according to these ideas. This is fatal, and you will notice in the following pages that McLoughlin has no idea of so doing. He admits the fundamental principles of the game, but believes it is what is born in you that must be cultivated and brought to flower. Thus his book is valuable to all players. He does not demand reconstruction to coincide with some pet theories of his own. He presents you with basic ideas and illustrates his use of them, but he leaves it for you to execute them in your own particular way.

To my mind the book has another great asset. It is not only interesting from the point of view of a pupil who is trying to develop his game, but it is also interesting, I

may even say fascinating, to the mature tennis player. In the pages we find McLoughlin's attractive personality which has made him so popular among the tennis players of the world, and as one reads along, it is really like having a friendly conversation with him after a match. I have known McLoughlin now for over three years, and every summer we go around to the same tournaments together—in fact, we room together like two college friends—so that I think I may say without exaggeration that I know him well, perhaps even better than any other of his tennis acquaintances, with the exception of our mutual friend, T. C. Bundy. From this long friendship I know with conviction that "he practices what he preaches"—not always the case with tennis players—and many a time I have been able to profit by his advice and test its soundness. As we all know he not only practices but succeeds in the things he preaches. One can find plenty of players who will try their best to point out the defects in his game. This is one of the easiest things to do in the tennis world. Remember, however, that he has *succeeded!* It seems to me that success is a complete vindication of the methods he has chosen.

There have been many books written on tennis, but the majority are antiquated and many others are written by men who are no longer in the game and are unable to realize the new conditions that now obtain. Especially in the last few years a great change has come about, and McLoughlin himself is one of the largest factors in this connection. I refer to the game's increase of speed—the service is faster and more deadly than some years ago, the striker-out has been forced to change his methods; it is speed that now counts! What master, then, would you

PREFACE

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rather follow than the man who is in part responsible for this change?

But let me again emphasize the fact that this book is not a scientific treatise based on theories which are, perhaps, technically correct but impossible to carry out in practice. It presents a method based on years and years of practice and tournament play—a method which has *proved* to be successful.

RICHARD N. WILLIAMS 2ND.

CAMBRIDGE, *May*, 1915.

As this book is being prepared for the press the sad news is published that Anthony F. Wilding, who represented Australia as a member of the Davis Cup team and won the world's tennis championship two years ago, has been killed in the fighting in the Dardanelles. All who have met him on the courts or off will be deeply affected by the death of so fine a tennis player and so splendid a sportsman. I have had the honor of meeting him in many a gruelling match, and can bear witness that I have never faced an opponent of finer character. He was an unassuming man and a brave man, with a hearty enthusiasm for the open and clean sport. His death will be a tragedy to his host of other friends, as it is to me. Mr. Wilding was second lieutenant in the Royal Marines. It is certain that he must have acquitted himself with the same cheerfulness and courage in battle that he brought to the lesser battles of the tennis turf. We shall miss him.

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Maurice E. McLoughlin *Frontispiece*

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TENNIS AS I PLAY IT

TENNIS AS I PLAY IT

CHAPTER I

CLIMBING TO THE EXPERT CLASS

THE thing that I wish least of all to do in writing this book is to assume any authority, to lay down the law as one who considers that he knows it all. To such of the match-winning champions as may chance to read it, I hasten to offer my admiration. So great is my debt to the game of tennis in general, for the fun it has given me and the friends it has enabled me to make, that I want to thank it as though it were an actual person, and to recommend it to youngsters in the game, whether they are boys of fourteen with their first rackets, or far older men and women who are just discovering its joys. In this book I offer diffidently what things I have found out by actual personal experience.

There is certainly no royal road to an expert game, and no words of mine can turn your lead into gold by some mysterious alchemy. One

does not learn tennis from a book, in any case, but by constant practice and study on the court itself, and the encountering and overcoming of the obstacles that present themselves in each day's play. A racket in the hand is worth any number of diagrams. As with everything else in life, it is salutary to be perpetually dissatisfied with the class of game you play; but this dissatisfaction should never cause despair, if you are really desirous of climbing to the expert class. Rather it should be a constant spur to your intelligence and ingenuity. In the first place it is most advisable to start with the correct positions and fundamental ideas, and, through whatever source, to learn to distinguish the difference between good and bad stroke-form. If you have contracted cramped and essentially wrong habits of play, by all means set about immediately to remedy them by the exercise of intelligence and practice. The most expert players have often worked for a long time to eradicate some faulty eccentricity of their earlier method. You should never relax the study of your various opponents and should strive to meet men with very different styles of play, that your tennis education may not be one-sided. Play constantly against men as good or,

CLIMBING TO EXPERT CLASS 19

preferably, better than yourself. Never be satisfied with easy little victories or strive to win in any old way. Play keenly in practice and *play your weaknesses*.

The best books I know of on the game are by Kidston, Vaile, Dewhurst, Doherty, Meyers, Wrenn, Wilding, Alexander, Little and Paret. Some of the books of this list were written after I had been playing the game for a number of years. Consequently I cannot say that they have directly helped me in my development. Those that were published before I took up the game—I refer in particular to the works of Wrenn and Doherty—did help me indirectly. I say “indirectly” because I have no recollection of making a study of those books at the time I was learning the strokes. Yet I gathered enough from them, and from the talk of those around me, to give me a rough idea of several stroke principles advocated by the writers. The more one actually plays, the more he will get from his reading on the game. But forget your books when you are out on the court! Have their suggestions in your mind, but do not think bookishly in actual play. Above all do not play at playing, monkey-shining and clowning about on the court. This is very injurious to your game

CLIMBING TO THE EXPERT CLASS

America's Davis Cup team of 1914; reading from left to right, M. E. McLoughlin (Captain), Champion R. N. Williams II, Karl Behr, and T. C. Bundy. The picture was taken at Boston, where we put in a few days' practice about a week prior to the International matches.

FIGURE 1

America's Davis Cup Team of 1913; reading from left to right, M. E. McLoughlin, H. H. Hackett (Captain), and R. N. Williams II. The picture was taken on the dock in New York just after our ship had landed, at the close of our successful quest in England for the cup. W. F. Johnson was also a member of the team in England, although he did not sail at the same time that we did.

It was made a wonderful homecoming by a host of friends who did us the honor to be present when the ship docked, and gave us a royal welcome.

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2

CLIMBING TO EXPERT CLASS 23

and yet something a great many very young players, and some old enough to know better, constantly do. Do not waste time justifying yourself to others for a mistake. Their attitude toward you will be one of "Methinks he doth protest too much!" anyway, and you will not take the profit you might from your disaster. If the mistake was unavoidable that will be obvious, but ten to one it was your own fault due to some radical defect in the way you played that shot or the position you were in. If you can diagnose the circumstances and learn from them, you will be far more sensible than in indulging a childish vanity. Poise, good temper, control of the feelings are even more necessary than science. Throwing down one's racket and turning the air blue merely increase one's nervousness. If it is in doubles, your more seasoned partner will feel like spanking you; and, anyway, if he is a good fellow he will not be laying too much stress on that one misplay. Doubles must be something like marriage. You have to bear with the other person's faults and try to remedy your own. If one is thirty, or even thirty-five, he is not too old to start a tennis career. He can learn to play a fairly good game and derive a great deal of pleasure from it. One of my best

CLIMBING TO THE EXPERT CLASS

Norman E. Brookes (left) and myself, taken just before our match in the Davis Cup Challenge Round of

FIGURE 3

Thomas C. Bundy (right) and myself, taken on the match court just before our doubles against Brookes and Wilding on the second day's play in the Internationals against Australasia, which was won by the latter.

FIGURE 4



FIGURE 3

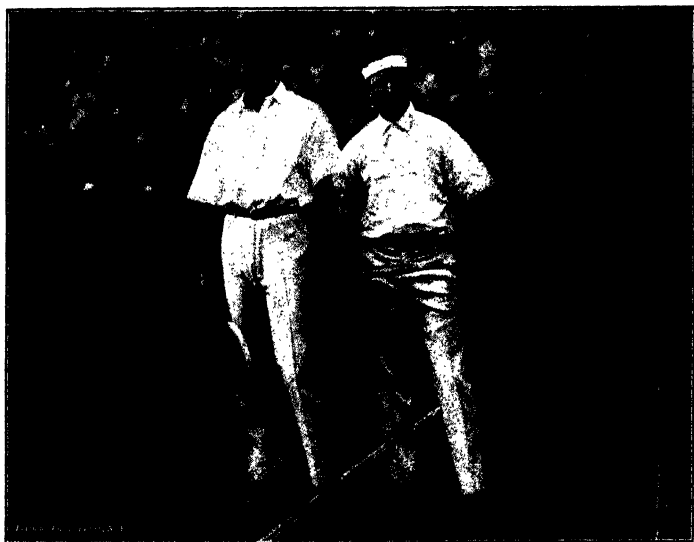


FIGURE 4

CLIMBING TO EXPERT CLASS 27

friends started at the age of thirty-five and plays a very good game. He will never be a "crack," but he plays well enough to beat some good players, and incidentally enjoys himself thoroughly. Tennis is rather too strenuous for old people. Golf is a better game for them. But a fairly active man of middle-age, with a good physique, should have no trouble in mastering the game sufficiently to be a factor in rather fast play. Condition counts of course with old or young, as in any game. Agility is especially necessary in tennis, but endurance plays an equal part. Personally, I do not drink or smoke, but this is not because of the game. It stands to reason, however, that temperance and common-sense in these things are a necessity if you are after success. A little success is very apt to turn a young fellow's head. Early success is always dangerous. I recall a young fellow who had beautiful tennis "form" and gave promise of being one of the very best. He started to play unusually well, and beat four or five of the best players in his locality when only sixteen or seventeen years old. He was given much publicity and praise. There was a noticeable change in him afterwards. He lost his respect for the men he had beaten, and his whole attitude showed clearly

what was going on in his mind. He beat two or three men that he never should have defeated, and then dropped from sight as far as tennis was concerned. Keep your head even if you show great promise.

Tennis ability is natural, not artificial. When one has mastered the essentials of the game he should then fall easily and gracefully into the style that comes most naturally to him. Many a beginner with bright prospects has been spoiled by a desire to pursue methods which certain authorities have advised rather than those in which he, personally, would be more likely to become proficient. This tendency is especially noticeable among the English players. They may be singled out on the courts the world over by their peculiar national style of play; and the young Britisher is prone to disregard all advice that leads him away from time-honored precepts. I recall a remark by an English gentleman some years ago after he had been watching the play of a young tennis prodigy on the public courts in San Francisco: "Most extraordinary—marvelous!" he exclaimed, and then added deprecatingly: "But he uses strokes that are not in the book!" Subsequent conversation developed that he regarded this deviation as disqualifying

CLIMBING TO EXPERT CLASS 29

the juvenile from any pretense to future greatness. In their published works on tennis, the Doherty brothers, themselves among the greatest players the world has known, insisted that no ball could be truly stroked unless the head of the racket, no matter what the player's position, were elevated above the wrist. And this is almost a sacred method to all Englishmen.

Do not make tennis a drudgery and become bored with the game, and do not over-study technique. I know a player who practices ten thousand strokes in the morning and plays all afternoon, day in and day out. He is like a pianist who practices all day on scales. The pleasure evaporates, and with it whatever "pep" your game may have. Play only when you are full of enthusiasm and ambition. Don't grind on after you have "gone stale." Nothing but harm can result. On the other hand, don't give up the attempt to remedy a deficiency in your game just because it takes a little hard work. If you haven't application enough, or interest enough, to work over your weak points you will never be a real player. Every club has one or two cranks. They never become first-rate players. They are satisfied with their little victories. Their method of practicing and doing things suits them. But

CLIMBING TO THE EXPERT CLASS

Ready for the Fray



Photo by Underwood & Underwood.

FIGURE 5

CLIMBING TO EXPERT CLASS 33

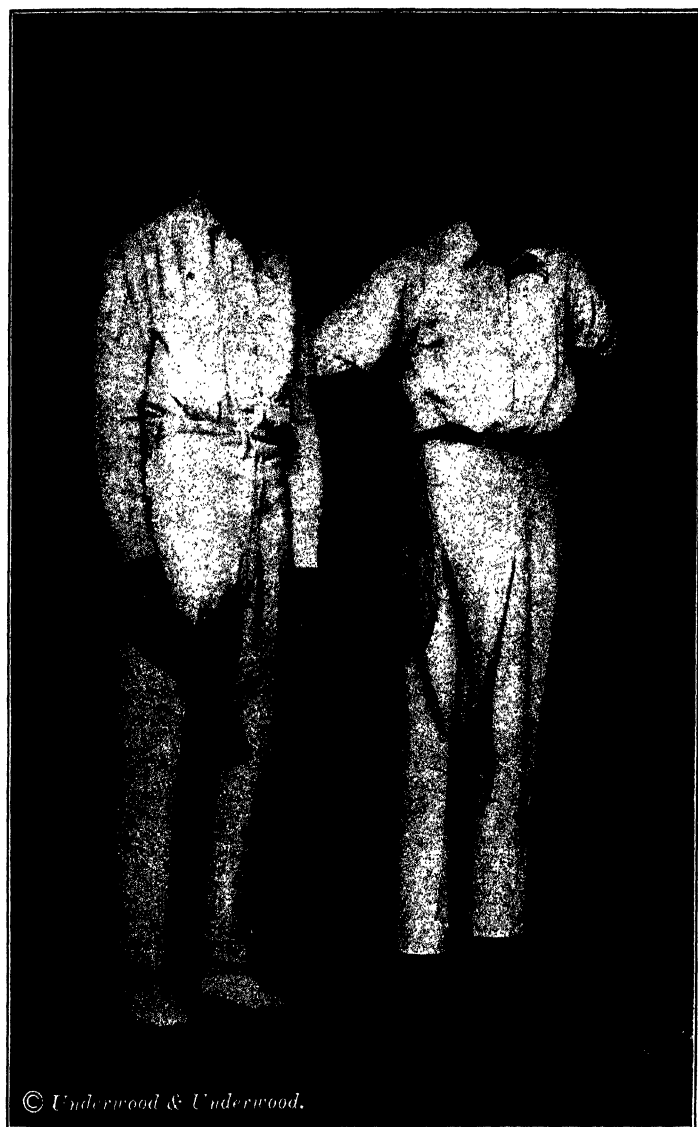
no young man with a chance to achieve things at tennis should be envious of joining their ranks. Even if you pick up the game very rapidly and easily you are not going to win all the time. It will probably be bad for you anyway. Better take many defeats from players "out of your class," and profit thereby.

Perhaps there is one point of the game that heretofore has been lightly treated in books. This is *imitation*. To the youngster taking up the game, imitation of the proper method, to my mind, is of vital importance in his proper development. A boy in his early teens is naturally very imitative. In almost everything he does he is unconsciously endeavoring to emulate somebody older than himself. This is particularly true in sports. Personally, I do not have to look back very many years to my boyhood, and I can distinctly remember being very vividly impressed by the beauty of expert tennis as exemplified by certain top-notchers. Naturally, I was ambitious to learn the proficiency of their strokes, and endeavored to imitate them. As I have said I had learned indirectly from books a little general stroke-form, and therefore was able to recognize the points of a first-class player. A sound book on the game can greatly aid a

CLIMBING TO THE EXPERT CLASS

Brookes and myself snapped by another camera just before our match in the Challenge Round started. Somebody has called for a smile, although it is rather difficult to produce one at such a time, since one is pretty well keyed up, and the nervous tension extreme just before a big match. This tension relaxes perceptibly after a few games of actual play, and the mind becomes entirely concentrated upon the business in hand.

Perhaps it might be of interest to note and compare in this picture two totally different styles of dress for the game. It will be seen that Brookes carries a cap in his hand which he wore throughout the match, whereas I never use any form of headgear. Brookes' shirt is seen to have long sleeves, while mine are amputated just above the elbow. Notice also that Brookes wears no belt, a common characteristic among Australian and English players. His footgear differs from mine only in the style of upper (as we both have the thin leather soles with steel spikes), his upper being of buckskin and mine of soft calfskin.



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FIGURE 6

CLIMBING TO EXPERT CLASS 37

youngster to this recognition. Select, then, one of the best players whose game you know and see constantly, and model your game on his in your own individual way. Choose a player, preferably, the features of whose game are like yours. Base the alterations of your game upon your own character as well as upon his general practices.

The more successfully you accomplish this imitation, the more your own individuality will enter into your strokes. As development goes on, these strokes will become more and more a part of yourself, until they are thoroughly assimilated. This is one of the many pillars that support an efficient game of tennis. I highly advocate professional teaching because it models the young player along the right lines. By all means dispense with all artificial aid. I know some players, for instance, who can play better with notches cut in the racket for each finger, but I certainly do not recommend this practice. If you wish to reason out the action of "spin" or "cut," Vaile's diagrams on the mechanics of the ball's flight can hardly be bettered. A blank wall, barn, etc., in your vicinity can be made use of sometimes for special practice of strokes you are learning or bettering. If such an aid is con-

veniently situated to you it may be a decided help, but do not overwork it. If you really have the game at heart, keep "plugging." I thought I should never improve. I was convinced in my own mind, but I kept plugging away.

Lastly come two points so important that they cannot be too often reiterated: *Keep your eye on the ball*, and *follow through*. First, last, and all the time: *Keep your eye on the ball*. Whenever possible, *keep it also upon the part of the ball that you are to hit*. This, we know, is an axiom of golf, a necessity in billiards; it is no less a prime factor in tennis. Your sight will slacken, and when it slackens you will begin to "hit it on the wood" and wonder what is the matter. In the majority of cases, after you have attained a certain proficiency, it is your eye. In expert tennis the eye *must* be riveted upon the ball all the time, as the intensity and swiftness of the play is extreme. The necessity of the "follow through" I shall deal with a little later on. If you cultivate laziness of attention in practice, or "soft" matches, you will never have a chance when the crucial time comes. From the moment you step upon the court to the moment you leave it you should be electric with concentrated attention. Your thought and ac-

CLIMBING TO EXPERT CLASS 39

tion must be almost simultaneous when the game is under way, and you cannot, by any means, afford to give a single thought to anything except the play in hand. You should be "on your toes" all the time. And all this does not mean that you should be vibrating in a highly nervous state. Calmness, coolness, and control must see you through. Say you are "passed" once or a dozen times, say that you serve and again serve double faults, every new point and every new stroke should be played as if nothing had gone before and as if it were the most important shot of the match. Tennis shows up character, and character tells every time.

SERVICE—I

The camera has caught me just a fraction of a second before the racket is to flash up on the ball in a practice match at the West Side Club in New York just prior to our preliminary matches against Australasia in 1913. The stance and body position in this picture indicates clearly that I have no intention of taking the net on this service. (It will be interesting to note in comparison with Figure 13, where I do intend to take the net.) This service is to be of the American twist variety; note the position of the ball in the air directly above the eyes. The ball is also at the point in the air at which it will be struck, and it will be plainly seen that it is essential to be fully extended in accomplishing this service. Note that the weight is being shifted entirely onto the left foot and the body is bending back, which allows for the proper position to execute an American service and also gives you added power when the racket goes through on the ball and the body is thrown forward at the same time. The right foot is just about to leave the ground entirely and will be the first portion of the body to cross the line.



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FIGURE 7

CHAPTER II

YOUR RACKET

(With Some Advice as to Proper Grip, Proper Dress for the Game, etc.)

DON'T get just "a racket." See that it is neither too heavy nor too light. I have in mind no especial racket to advise for a beginner. I should say, "Buy the best racket you can afford." After all, the balance and weight of your racket are of first importance. The latter should range between $13\frac{1}{2}$ and $14\frac{1}{4}$ ounces, the weight felt to be either evenly distributed or light in the head as the racket is swung in the hand. A great many players are prone to judge the balance of a racket by placing their finger beneath the screw through the throat-piece. In reality this is a false basis to form an opinion from, as the position of the screw even in the same make of racket is ever varying. One should always form his impression of a racket's balance by the way it feels when he makes a few trial

swings. One of the chief points in the care of my own rackets is to keep them away from all dampness. If the racket is laid aside for any length of time, I generally put it in a press, first being sure that the gut is not liable to break while it is on the shelf. If this should happen, there is danger of the frame being pulled out of shape, owing to the uneven tension on the wood. So, whenever there is any doubt in my mind about the strings I generally cut them out. As to the make of my own racket,—until this winter, and for six years past, I have used a Sutton Star, made by the firm of Wright & Ditson. Recently they have done me the honor of putting a racket that bears my own name on the market. It is one greatly to my liking and I expect to use it a good deal in the future. I handle a little more weight, approximately $14\frac{1}{2}$ oz., than the average player, and my racket's balance is also a little more in its head than is the case with the weapon of the average player. I am inclined to favor a large, rather than a small, racket handle, whenever the size of the player's hand permits of a choice. But, oftentimes, a player simply cannot do as well with a large handle, and it would only result in a serious handicap if he persisted in its use. By a large handle I do not

refer to a circumference much exceeding $5\frac{1}{4}$ ins. As to the stringing, I do not believe that you can specify just exactly how tightly a racket should be strung, for you cannot escape the fact that no two players' tastes exactly tally. For example, Brookes prefers a medium tight string, whereas Williams prefers very tight stringing, and thus it goes through a list of the experts. It has been said that the cross strings should not rob the long strings, but you will find that the expert stringer pulls up his long strings to conform with the tension of the cross strings.

Does a heavy racket make for slowness? Certainly, in certain strokes; in particular, those at the net that require quick wrist-action and an instant shift of racket position. But one's ground strokes, if anything, are speeded up by a heavy racket because of the fact that, naturally, in a full arm swing you are putting more weight behind the ball. That is the reason, in my own case, for using considerable weight in the racket-head. It gives the greatest pace and length on drives, with the least amount of energy expended. But, in attaining what proficiency I can claim, I had to gradually train my wrist to stand the added strain and leverage when I had to handle the racket quickly, for there the weight told

SERVICE—II

A little further along in the American service, when I have no intention of taking the net. The ball has been struck and is seen to be leaving the camera's field. The picture illustrates the poise that is necessary in delivering a service of this type. It can be seen that all my weight is upon the toe of the left foot and my left leg and right arm are practically in line for the moment, thus establishing the required balance. The racket arm is about to descend in the completion of the follow-through, at the same time the body will complete its rotation as the right leg swings in.

FIGURE 8

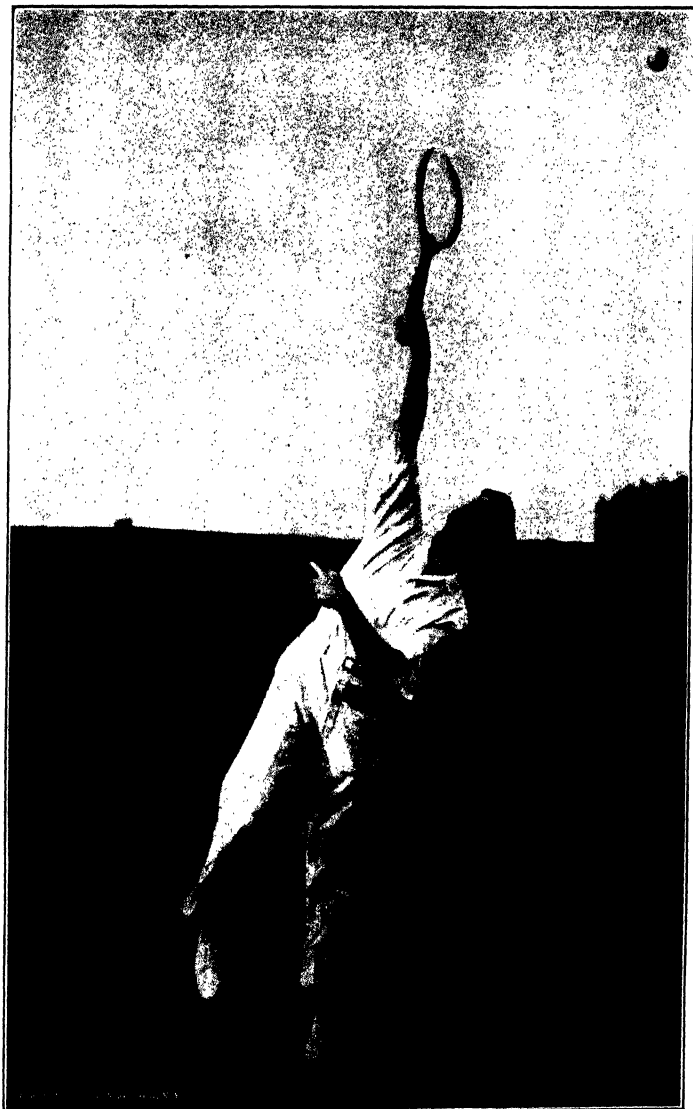


FIGURE 8

against me. So you can see why I advise the average player to use an evenly balanced or light-in-the-head racket. Under ordinary conditions it is unnecessary to insist on new balls after each set, but new balls are seldom good for more than from two to four sets, depending, of course, on the courts and conditions under which they are used. Always use the best and newest balls you can afford. To keep on using old balls until they have grown very light—or, on grass, very heavy and green,—is distinctly injurious to one's game, especially if one ever expects to indulge in tournament play; for your game has been unconsciously built up with a ball of incorrect weight and balance, and it is obvious that your strokes will be seriously affected when you meet with balls of the required standard. Also, the average player should always be very careful to keep the net at its proper height. It is a very common thing for him to become lax on this point, and, as in the use of old balls, he becomes accustomed to falsely favorable conditions. A man should never play in the rain unless he has to. As a matter of fact the amount of tennis he must ever play under these conditions is very small. Sometimes, though, in a fine drizzle a match game is not called and you are virtually

playing in rain otherwise interpreted by the referee. This has happened to me not infrequently. There is practically no way to protect your racket. The only thing to do after the strings are once thoroughly moist is to cut them out of the frame and save the frame from warping.

In dressing for the game, simply keep two points in mind. First, you should carry as little weight in clothing as is comfortable with decency and comfort. Your under garments should be as light and as scanty as possible; your shirt as easy and unbinding as you can get, with abbreviated sleeves preferably. You will want no hindrance in the free swing of your arms. Flannel trousers of light weight, snugly belted, loose enough not to bind, and in no way liable to trip, are the best in my opinion, though a few players still affect knickerbockers—my friend Horace Rice of New South Wales being, however, the only first-class player I know who does so. A polo-coat or sweater is a good thing to have on hand to slip on between matches. Of course, shoes for tennis vary entirely with the court you play on. I am a believer in the lightest shoe possible for all hard courts, excepting asphalt, where a shoe that has a light upper with an extra heavy rubber sole is better.

Leather uppers with rubber soles, to my mind, are apt to be too clumsy, unless a player suffers from weak ankles, in which case the bal type of leather shoe with a rubber sole is a very helpful support. On asphalt courts the additional cushion of an extra heavy woolen sock is advisable. To me, personally, a cap or a hat is very annoying, although Brookes and Wilding are both known to wear some sort of head-gear. I think it is better, if possible, to accustom one's self to play without a hat under all conditions. Oftentimes a hat, especially in a rush to the net, has to be pulled down on the head so tightly, in order to keep it on, that it actually tends to stop the blood-flow. For some players who perspire freely around the head, a handkerchief or band is used about the forehead. But this, by no means, applies to players in general. Personally, I have never felt the necessity of such a device even in the hottest weather and during the hottest set. In almost all the American grass court tournaments the spike shoe is used, though rarely by the English, in their own tournaments. On account of the wear and tear that the continuous use of the spike shoe has on the grass, few clubs in America permit such a shoe in practice, but their periodical use in tournament play

SERVICE—III

This shows my racket descending during the follow-through. The photograph was made during the Davis Cup matches at the West Side Club in 1914, and is an exception, as the camera has caught me when not taking the net on service, which I almost invariably did do throughout the matches. A comparison with Figures 17, 18, and 19 illustrates very clearly the difference in body action and balance when taking the net on service and when not doing so. The body does not lean so far in the court, the right leg below the knee because of this does not need to kick back as in Figure 16 to avoid the foot fault. In fact, throughout a service of this type, the action is a great deal more restrained than in a service that couples with it the rush to the net.



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FIGURE 9

each year, I am sure, does no appreciable injury to the courts. The length of the spike is regulated by the National Association to a maximum of $\frac{1}{4}$ ". The average shoe has from 12 to 15 spikes (including the heel).

Latterly the question of the player's grip on the racket has been much discussed. In my view it rests with the player himself to determine what grip is the least tiring and gives him the greatest control of the ball. There are two methods of changing the grip in general use. Roughly speaking, some players, in switching from forehand to backhand, turn the hand instead of the racket; others turn the racket but not the hand, a style favored in England where they also favor the "head of the racket above the wrist" principle, all of which results in there being quite an angle between forearm and racket-handle on the backhand. Mr. Vaile has pointed out that this should not be the case, that the racket handle and forearm should be applied in what he calls the same "plane of force." And he distinctly favors the knuckles facing the coming ball, not, as in the English style, nearly the whole back of the hand. I can only say that there have been famous exponents of both systems. The question of grip is largely solved in the illustrations

to this book, so I shall not give it much space here. Some players use their thumb down the racket to strengthen their backhand. It all depends upon the make of the man and his strength and accuracy of wrist. As to the angle between forearm and racket-handle, Mr. Vaile's example of the former method's similarity to pushing a flat-car from the rear *corner* instead of from *directly* behind it, seems reasonable, and for the average player I think I should advise a pretty horizontal backhand with the knuckles forward. But there again the make of the player will have a great deal to do with it, and above all it is necessary to cultivate *a grip that is natural to you*. There will have to be *some* change for the backhand, and the time element will enter in in fast play. In general, hold the racket somewhat loosely, so as not to tire the arm, except at the instant of impact with the ball when a firm grip is imperative. In only one instance should the racket be held loosely at the time of impact; that is when a "stop-volley" is employed to drop a ball just over the net. This is often a very effective stroke on turf courts, where contact of the ball with a loosely held racket causes it to fall almost lifeless. On asphalt the bound is always greater and the stroke not so effective. Beals

Wright dropped the ball short over the net with a slice that gave it back-spin and caused it to "die" where it hit, just as the pool-player holds his cue ball by imparting to it a bit of "draw."

SERVICE—IV

A service similar in type to Figure 7, although taken on a different occasion. The picture was taken just at the moment of impact and the arm is seen fully extended, the body rotating at the waist as the right leg swings in, although it is evident I have no intention of taking the net, as a comparison with Figure 16 will show.

FIGURE 10

SERVICE—V

The completion of my American service when not taking the net. The racket is seen to have come through almost to the ground, at the same time as the right leg has swung in. Naturally, to recover the proper balance preparatory to the return of the service, the left leg must come up even with the right and the body weight be evenly distributed on the balls of the feet to be ready on the instant to start in any direction that the occasion demands.

FIGURE 11



FIGURE 10



FIGURE 11

CHAPTER III

COURTS, AND CONDITIONS OF PLAY UPON THEM

WITHIN the last ten years, the intense speed of the present game has been developed, and has been due for the most part to American methods and, possibly, as far as America is concerned, to the California contingent. There has been a similar increase in the speed of the game in other countries as well, excepting England, although I am sure America has led in the development along these lines. In California this development can be traced directly to the hard courts. But national championships now attract players from all parts of the country, and the slap-dash Westerner has met his Eastern rival in tournament competition and learned a lesson in steadiness. The man of the Atlantic seaboard has profited by the necessity of shaping his style to offset the quick-fire, though erratic, mode of attack; and thus each, no matter how stubbornly he may strive to ad-

here to his own formula, is unconsciously weeding out its faults and assimilating the merits of the other. In my opinion the coming champion will be one who has most perfectly blended rapidity of action with control of placement; who will be neither "slow but sure" nor fast but uncertain; one who can add high speed to the precision of the "safe" game.

That two distinct styles of play differentiate players from the extreme West from those east of the Rocky Mountains is, as I have hinted, almost entirely due to the difference in the courts in use in these two sections of the United States. On the Pacific Coast, tournament tennis is played almost entirely on asphalt; in the East the turf court predominates everywhere, though there are many clay or "dirt" courts also. Tennis played upon asphalt develops the need of a far faster game than that on turf. With the latter there is always a tendency for the player to meet the ball; because of its slow bound he has time to set himself and deliver an easy, well-calculated stroke. On the Pacific Coast courts the fast-bounding ball meets the player: in other words, the difference of a small fraction of a second is sufficient in many cases to prevent his setting himself for the stroke. He is seldom given

time to deliberate, and must make his choice of stroke and placing on the briefest instant. As a result the Coast player has developed methods which mean fast stroking, whether in or out of position. Without opportunity for the perfect poise and "set" which the slower turf courts afford, he strives for a quick "kill" rather than to work his player out of position at the end of a long rally. Because of this tendency the asphalt court player's game appears far more spectacular than that of his Eastern rival, while in turn the latter has developed much the greater steadiness and a better poise and grace. The Western asphalt court cracks in extreme cold, and hence it is not practicable for the East, though hard surfaces would be an advantage to England, and seemingly feasible over there. Even the second and third grade players of the Middle West and Atlantic States have better-developed ground-strokes than those from the extreme West; to use a colloquialism of the courts, theirs is a "strokie" game, the long, sweeping follow-through giving grace and style even to those far from the top in point of actual skill. To equalize this there is the greater speed which the Westerner has been forced to attain in covering his court, his readiness at the instant to do the most

SERVICE—VI

Showing my American service just before the right leg is to leave the ground, and the body weight thus transferred entirely onto the left will be raised up on the toes of the left foot, as the ball reaches the point in the air at which it will be struck. The ball in this picture, which has been tossed up by the left hand, has not quite reached this point, as shown by the fact that it has not as yet reached a position directly above my eyes or sufficiently high enough above my head to be struck when fully extended.

A glance at my service pictures collectively reveals the fact that all the action takes place with the weight on the left foot. It must be remembered, however, that at one short stage in the very beginning of the service the weight is rocked back onto the right leg, and then forward again onto the left. This has taken place in this picture just a moment before the photographer made the exposure.



FIGURE 12

effective thing possible, whether he be in position or off his balance; and, above all, the marked degree to which he has developed his overhead work.

There are some concrete courts in California, although the asphalt courts vastly outnumber them, and are very much more practicable to play on. Concrete is so absolutely unyielding that even the Western players who have become toughened to the hard asphalt courts cannot stand the strain of continuous play on the still harder cement. In fact, in a great many localities concrete courts are being supplanted by those of either asphalt or dirt. I hardly know of an important tournament at the present time that is played upon the former surface. We have another typical court that would come under the head of a dirt court; it is a combination of gravel and oil. When this court is properly laid it is most delightful to play on, because it has all the attributes of asphalt and dirt minus the tendency of the latter to "kick up." There is still another combination of materials, that of shell and gravel, which, if properly mixed and laid, makes a wonderful court. However, it is very difficult to get this exact combination and consequently there are few such. But, like the

oil courts, they combine all that is best in other hard surfaces, and are far more cleanly to play on than is oil, besides being even easier on the feet.

Given different types of court, each at its highest grade, I prefer the grass court. A second-rate grass court is always surpassed by a hard surface, where the balls bound true, but, provided the grass court is in any fit shape, I should advise a beginner to start playing upon it. I have sometimes wished that I had grounded my own game in its early stages upon grass. It tends to aid you in developing more accurately two of your major strokes, namely: the fore and backhand drives. On the other hand, the hard court has its advantages over grass in that its surface is more uniform and, as already stated, increases one's speed. Personally, I prefer asphalt to "dirt," because its surface is absolutely unvarying under all conditions, whereas the dirt court is very apt to "kick up" and make one slip on the loose surface. However, some players do not mind this loose surface and prefer the "dirt" because it is a good deal easier on one's feet.

On the whole, the grass courts in England surpass those of any other country. Those at Wim-

bledon and Queen's Club are the finest I have played on. One of the main reasons for this success is climatic; another, the age of the turf and the care it has received. Naturally there are certain particular courts in Australia and America that compare favorably with those of England. To name a few, there are those in America, at Newport, Boston (Longwood), New York (West Side), Philadelphia (various cricket clubs,—Merion, Germantown and Philadelphia); in Chicago, the Onwentsia Club at Lake Forrest; in Australia, the courts at Double Bay, the Royal Sydney Golf Club in Sydney, and the courts of the Lawn Tennis Association of Victoria in Melbourne; and in New Zealand, the courts at Lancaster Park on which the International matches were played in Christchurch. For the famous courts of the world I should unquestionably point to those at Wimbledon and Newport as standing out most prominently. And now the courts of the West Side Club at Forest Hills, Long Island, have been placed in this same class by virtue of the great international matches played there in 1914. The most particular tournament advantages these have for the player are that they are wonderfully uniform in surface, and like a perfect billiard table

SERVICE—VII

Showing my American service a fraction of a second before impact. The racket is being swung in a sort of rotary motion around in back, like that we employ when swinging an Indian club. It is during this time that the racket is gaining impetus so as to come up on the ball with terrific velocity. Again will be noted the idea of poise, as a perpendicular line drawn up through my left leg and through the body is seen to approximately divide my weight, which thus establishes a balance. Here is seen very plainly the bent back position of the body just before the ball is struck. The small of the back literally forms an arch, and tremendous strain is brought about on the lumbar muscles as the body is snapped out of this arched-back position in a forward direction after the ball is struck. This, however, is the main source of power that is exerted in a fast American service.



Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

FIGURE 18

permit accurate handling of the ball. Our best grass courts, as you see, are in the East. In fact, there are none at all in the far West except in Canada. I won't go into the subject of turf very deeply, mainly because I am not competent to do so. I do know, however, that the most satisfactory tennis turf is that of slender blades that grow very thickly and entirely free from weeds and clover. The quality of the grass tennis court, assuming that you have the proper turf, depends almost entirely upon the care it receives. This is a great deal more intricate than the average person realizes and some of the best courts in the world have been likened to babies because of the constant attention they demand. A very natural tendency is for the court to become too springy,—hence the incessant rolling that a good court receives.

I am not going to tell you how to lay out a tennis court. You can easily obtain directions for that, and the correct measurements. But I would emphasize a few important points. First see that your court is situated so that the sun passes across it in line with the net, and *not* longitudinally. Even England's greatest court, the famous centre court at Wimbledon, has the serious defect of occasionally blinding the player

SERVICE—VIII

This picture was taken during my matches at Newport in 1913 for the National Championship. It is very similar, indeed, to the action as shown in service Figure 13, only it has been taken further around behind me and more clearly illustrates the bent back position of the body and the nicety of balance that is required (with the weight all pivoted on the toes of the left foot) to execute a service of this extreme variety. This photograph indicates, perhaps better than any other one I have, the reason I do not advise the average player to attempt an extreme amount of break through the use of the American service. From the position as shown here the body, principally the back, must snap forward as the racket comes onto the ball; at the same time this must be accompanied with a twisting motion which I have heretofore described as the "rotation" at the waist. All this creates a tremendous amount of strain on the back muscles, one that very few players are physically capable of long withstanding.



FIGURE 14

at one end when the niggardly English sun makes an appearance. See that the light conditions on your court are, as nearly as possible, impartial. Then be generous with the height and width of your back-stop nettings. There is nothing more irritating than to have to postpone a hot set to retrieve a necessary ball. It will repay you to "wire" the ends of your court with care. Some courts even have a projecting top netting at an angle to the vertical back-stop in order to discourage smashes that bound abnormally high. Do what you can to provide for like contingencies, and *do not have your back-stops too near the base-line*. This is a common error in many otherwise correct courts. It may sometimes be a question, as in private courts, of the extent of the ground at one's disposal; but exhaust every possibility to get as much space between the base-line and the back-stop as possible. If in your court it is impossible for a player to extend himself to reach the bound of a deep lob without colliding with the netting, then it is too near. The court should give one ample room to make deep "recoveries." Nothing clogs a good player's game like the constant feeling that the back-nets are cramping him. It has a definite psychological effect. Twenty feet or so is a good

distance. No trees should cast a shadow on the court or interfere in any way. Keep your court in good condition. A grass court cannot be used as constantly as a dirt court unless you have room to shift it around your lawn. The "upkeep" is more expensive. Beware also of worm-casts. A dirt or clay court should always be swept and watered before it is rolled, and this whole process should be gone through frequently. The amount of "upkeep" you can afford will depend upon the finances of your club, or upon your own if it is a private court; but, if you exercise discrimination in your times of play and can enlist the services of an experienced man to sweep, roll, and re-mark when necessary, it will highly repay you. Practise on a lumpy, ill-marked court is almost worthless. Asphalt or concrete courts have painted lines, are easily swept, and, with the proper drainage, dry almost immediately. A court should slope a little from the centre to the sides, though almost imperceptibly, for drainage. The upkeep of asphalt amounts to almost nothing, but grass courts cannot be clipped too closely and must never present a moth-eaten surface. The grass frequently has to be nursed back to spots that go bare, as re-sodding is not advisable. In general, the judi-

cious use of cinders will help in draining a dirt or grass court. The most trampled parts of the court are bound to be in the vicinity of the net and around the base-line, and therefore these parts should be particularly well-drained. For good drainage the courts should be raised somewhat from the surrounding ground if possible. Care should particularly be exercised in draining and weeding a grass court. Clay courts differ from dirt courts in having a subsoil of cinders rather than of unsifted gravel. A clay mixture supplies their cohesion. The top-dressing is clay instead of sifted gravel as in the other case. But one type of dirt or clay court shades into another, and there are various kinds of top-dressings. Get an expert to tell you what is suitable, as well as to teach you the proper construction. Asphalt courts are hard on the feet, and, as I have mentioned, they will become soft with heat or crack with frost. Concrete is even worse on the feet, and hard on the eyes as well. Both this type and the disastrous cinder court wear out footwear and tennis balls very quickly; the latter practically tears them to pieces. The initial expense of asphalt or concrete is, of course, a large item, despite the simplicity of their demands afterward in a suitable climate. My ex-

SERVICE—IX

A study and comparison of this snapshot with Figure 16 will show a slight variation of angle at which the body is set just about the moment the ball is struck. Also the ball is seen to be thrown up less directly above my body, though directly above my eyes, and in a position slightly in advance of that shown in Figure 16. This has caused less necessity for bending back at the waist and is clearly a service where I intend to use little or no break on the ball. This service will have a decided swerve in the air and when it hits the ground will continue on the same general line of its flight. On the other hand; in Figure 16 there is clearly an indication that I will put considerable twist on the ball, thus causing it to swerve in a similar manner as here, but when it hits the ground instead of continuing on in a general direction of its swerve it will "break back" from its line of flight.



FIGURE 15

perience on wood is not very great. What little I have indulged in was very satisfactory, particularly when the wood was covered with canvas. In fact, I do not believe a wood court is very practicable without a canvas cover, or some other material to both deaden and slow the bound of the ball.

SERVICE—X

The moment of impact of the ball and racket in my American service. The ball has just been struck and it is at this point in the follow-through of the racket that the amount of twist the ball shall have is determined as well as its direction. Note the body bent back at the waist and the head thrown back in order to allow the racket to come sufficiently "from behind" the ball to produce the "kick" this service must have. It is interesting to note the position of my right leg in this picture, as it exemplifies the point in my text referring to how I avoid being foot-faulted, with the foot that swings in. Notice that the leg is bent sharply back at the knee, which thus throws the right *foot* behind the line at the time the ball is struck, even though a portion of the right leg may be over the line in the air. It is this point, which occupies so much more time to describe than it does to accomplish, that many foot-fault linesmen fail to note and I am guilty of frequent foot-faulting in their minds because they do not dis-associate my right leg and right foot.



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FIGURE 16

CHAPTER IV

THE SERVICE

IN America the service is a more *offensive* stroke than ever before. Its value is much greater than formerly. It has become of increased importance to get the receiver or striker-out upon the defensive. The service has been compared to the smash, and indeed there is a distinct similarity between these strokes. They go hand in hand, as is evidenced by the fact that in the case of most good servers you find a man who is a good smasher. A notable exception, however, is seen in the case of Norman E. Brookes, who possesses a peerless service but whose accompanying overhead work is extremely weak in comparison. Personally, I never think of my services and smashes in the same way when I am going about them. I am inclined to classify each more individually as a stroke, mainly because of the finer element of timing that the smash demands. In many cases it is true that you use a very similar swing. For the service,

however, you are practically swinging on a stationary ball. The different types of service may be roughly classified as the straight overhead forehand service, the forehand service with a cut to make the bound of the ball "break" in the general direction of the line of flight, and the forehand chop service, which is given back-spin that causes it to shoot low. Then there is the typically American service, which I first knew as the "American twist," (I shall go into the peculiarity of this service a little farther on) and two reverse services of importance; the first being the reverse overhead cut, and the second that stroke so remarkably illustrated by Thomas C. Bundy, namely the Reverse American. My own service is both straight forehand, forehand cut, and American, with occasional dabbings in all the other varieties. In the main it has been the result of years of slow development, except for the American twist, which I determined to learn as quickly as possible when quite young.

In regard to a good service position, I should say, let it be one with your left foot (which is in advance provided you are right-handed; if left-handed, the converse of course is true) within about two inches of the baseline, and stand about two or three feet to the right (or left, according

to whether you are serving diagonally to left or right) of an imaginary continuation of the centre line of the service courts. The left foot should be turned sideways, the outer edge of the foot being nearest the line, at about a forty-five degree angle. These are good general directions, but, of course, I do not wish them to seem ironclad. Wilding, for instance, stands far behind the baseline when serving. My left foot, or Lindley Murray's right, is usually side-on to the line. In the Reverse American Service both feet are more nearly in a line parallel to the baseline. But these are differences that come after assaying one's tendency to foot-fault, after the development of new strokes, and so on. In general you will find the position I have outlined an easy and natural one for all save reverse services. To absolutely new players, I would say: Throw the ball high enough, and do not hit down. Most beginners do not throw the ball high enough or swing at all. They dab at it. Naturally you will not begin with confidence enough for an ample swing, but by all means begin to cultivate it as soon as you can, provided you foster your accuracy at the same time. Do not hit down, because the ball already is descending toward you. Try to get it over the net, with margin,

SERVICE—XI

The picture shows me a little further along in the follow-through of the American service. The flexed wrist position indicates my having imparted excessive twist on this particular ball. The right leg is seen to be swinging in constituting the first stride in the rush for the net. At the same time it will be noted that my body is in the act of falling forward on the ball, which thus has given more force to the stroke and also aids me in the start for the net. The right foot has swung in over the line now since the ball has been struck in the first stride toward the net. The picture illustrates how closely linked are the service and the act of taking the net. They must be, else valuable time is lost which is really figured in fractions of seconds, but it makes all the difference in the world sometimes whether you are three feet further in or not when the return of service reaches you at the net.

The photograph was made during one of the matches in the Longwood Tournament of 1914 at Boston.



Photo by International News Service, N. Y.

FIGURE 17

even with too great margin, rather than "bag" it constantly. The server need not necessarily be directly under the ball when serving. He will get better results with the ball thrown up a trifle to the right. Still less is he directly under the ball in the reverse American service, as the ball is struck in this case slightly to the right, lower down, and in front of the player. But the American twist demands that the ball be hit directly over the player in order to get the proper amount of spin and break. It caused quite a notable change in my swing and stance to first accomplish the desired effect. Since I learned it, however, I have gradually moderated my swing in order to bring about more forward speed and less break.

Primarily, put all your efforts into getting a straight ball with fair pace that will travel over the net each time and land within the correct service court. Then cultivate a second ball that is not a "lollypop." Then try to place your serves in different parts of the service court. Master these fundamentals before you attempt any great pace or any cut or spin whatever. As soon as you can, cultivate a *slight* amount of cut. An absolutely straight fast ball is an extremely hard one to control. With exceptions, in the

case of chop and reverse services, one should always utilize his full height, hitting the ball at the top of the swing.

In one word is the whole secret of an effective modern service. That word is "Control." You may admire the pace I personally get in my delivery. I play according to my nature, but I have never desired pace exclusively. Sometimes pace is a distinct disadvantage,—often the refusal on the part of a young player to school himself to control and his inability to resist the temptation to "knock the cover off the ball" has been absolutely fatal. Change of pace is one of the prime requisites of control. This is shown clearly by Norman E. Brookes, one of the greatest service players of the world, who, contrary to the general belief that he has a marvelous break in his delivery, accomplishes wonders with change of pace and crafty placing. William A. Larned, though never spoken of as a great server, was far from weak in this department; the reason being just his perfect control of the ball. Many fine players, in fact, have no remarkable break to their services, no wonderful speed; but just a free, easy delivery, with enough pace.

Never serve without making up your mind, without some definite intention as to where you

wish to put the ball and how hard you are going to hit it to accomplish some particular purpose. It is by no means essential to develop a service such as mine, or such as that of any other experienced player. Rather cultivate the method of delivery most natural to you, swing as nature has built you to swing, provided there is nothing cramped or radically wrong about your stance. Practice, practice, practice until you can place the ball wherever you wish. Then cultivate sufficient speed so that if the ball is placed well you can throw your opponent off his balance. Vary that speed with a lower one to catch your opponent off his guard. Try to keep him guessing always as to just where and just how hard your next service is to come. After all, having attained control, there remains only the matter of making up your mind where you want to put the ball. Every new opponent will cause you to serve in a different way. You will have to appraise the weaknesses of each and play upon them.

Learn to get your weight into the stroke as much as you can, fall forward as you hit and follow through, do not stand still and let your arm and reach do all the work. For great speed the swing should be as nearly a complete circle

SERVICE—XII

Illustrating a further stage in the follow-through of the severe American twist service than is shown in Figure 17. Here also the body is seen to be falling forward and the right leg has almost completed its first stride toward the net. The picture was taken during one of my matches on the famous Center Court at Wimbledon, England.



Photo by American Press Association, N. Y.

FIGURE 18

as possible,—though not, of course, one exactly returning—but do not try to swing back too far at first. The illustrations to this book will add the most important suggestions in all these matters, and will repay careful study.

In general I may say that, under almost all circumstances in the game, the weight of the body should be distributed on the balls of the feet, for it is only in this way that you can get the perfect body poise that is necessary in the proper shifting of positions. I know in my own case that there is hardly a time during the actual play that my weight isn't entirely off my heels. This is illustrated in a concrete way by the fact that my rubber-soled shoes will be worn through completely on the balls of my feet and the heels hardly show any signs of wear.

It is very important to make a practice of getting your first ball over the net. If your first service is "in" it has a distinct psychological effect upon your opponent. If you usually net your first ball your opponent gains confidence rapidly. There is a great tendency on the part of beginners to slow down noticeably upon their second ball. Sometimes the difference is ludicrous. Meanwhile your opponent has gained confidence and is in a position to treat that lady-

like stroke in the way you will least care for. Cultivate a second ball of good pace, and use your head about it just as strenuously as about your first ball. But don't miss getting your first ball "in" if you can possibly help it. To give another and important reason for this, I should say that it saves a tremendous amount of energy, for you can allow about 50% of your energy-expended to service alone.

In serving you can only have one foot off the ground—in the case of right hand players it is the right foot—and this foot must not cross the baseline until after the ball is dispatched. You must fall into no such habit as that of taking a step or a skip before swinging or hitting the ball. For this you will be foot-faulted in any match, and it is easy enough to avoid. With the best players, in the rush for the net after serving, the great danger of foot-faulting is the swinging in of the foot that is in the air over the line before the impact of ball and racket. There has always been considerable speculation as to whether I foot-faulted, or not. If snap-shot photographs are a criterion I have yet to see one that shows me flagrantly offending in this respect. The various great players employ different individual methods of avoiding this tendency. Wil-

liams drags the toe of his right foot on the ground just before he swings in, thus retarding that foot for a fraction of a second and very neatly keeping within the rules. Brookes has acquired the habit of noticeably holding his free foot till his racket has come through on the ball. Personally, I kick back my right foot from the knee as the right leg swings in, which thus places the foot itself, if not the entire leg, behind the line. Wilding stands back 18" or more behind the baseline before his delivery. In a match game I generally follow every service to the net, as this is part of my general plan of attack. Getting to the net after serving is so much a part of the service itself that I never think about it. This brings me, however, to the next step in one's service.

The stroke is completed, and the body should be thrown forward after the flight of the ball. In the modern game the server has a distinct advantage in commanding the ensuing rally, provided his service is at all effective; for if he has outmanœuvred his opponent with pace enough and clever enough placing, he can usually reach the net, and hold it, before the other man. His stroke has thrown him into a "running start" before his opponent has moved. He can either take

SERVICE—XIII

The picture shows me serving during a practice match at Forest Hills just prior to the Internationals. The camera has caught me at a very similar moment to that shown in Figure 18, the racket head having progressed on the follow-through only a few inches further. One thing may be noticed in these service pictures, that the position of my head and the direction of my gaze clearly illustrate the necessity of keeping the eye on the ball. It can be judged even that the gaze, as is sometimes the case in a golf stroke, is fixed for an appreciable moment at the point where the ball *was* before it was struck. This picture shows that the ball has sped a considerable distance and yet my eyes have not yet returned to the court.

FIGURE 19



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FIGURE 19

advantage of this or play back at the baseline. But in all good modern American play the overwhelming rule is "To the net!" To waver somewhere in mid-court between the two extremes is usually fatal, as you run a great risk of shots dropped at your feet, and cross-court shots pass much wider. But if you go in to the net to volley, go in as fast as you can and volley from well within the service line. Of course there are times when it is foolhardy to rush for the net, when your service has gone wrong in some way, when you are up against deadly lobs which make nothing of your service, and so on. But with every new opponent you will have to meet and solve some such problem. Try, in general, to control your body so that, though full-tilt for the net, you may yet reserve a minimum of power to turn for some passing stroke that tries to catch you badly out. Brookes has a fine command of the half-volley and low volley. But although he may not seem to come in as fast or as far as some players, in reality he gets like lightning to the exact spot for an effective return. In modern championship matches the service is almost invariably won by the server for some time. It is extremely difficult to break through. Last year at the West Side Tennis Club I did not break

through Brookes' service until our thirty-first game. We had alternated winning our services up till then. And in large measure this condition is due to the fact that in fast modern tennis the server has the "jump" on the receiver in the rally. In England, their service as a whole has no very distinctive features. They merely employ the service as a means of getting the ball into play,—a very different method from that of the American and the Australian who have incorporated it as a most important medium of attack. To remark on a few particular Americans,—Lindley Murray's service is described by many as of similar type to my own; Karl Behr's is a forehand cut; Larned's, a forehand; Wright's would classify as a forehand cut; and Williams uses forehand and American. Parke, the Irishman, uses the forehand; Brookes has command of that, the forehand cut, and the American. Wilding more consistently uses the American service than almost any of the players mentioned, as there is excessive twist on nearly every ball he serves.

As of particular interest to all tennis players, judging from the inquiries that are constantly made, I wish to attempt to analyze the true American service and the American reverse ser-

vice, before I close this section. A great deal, of course, may be gained from careful study of the pictures accompanying this text; but I am sure a few words will not seem amiss. Mechanically speaking, the whole explanation of these services is that the axis on which the ball spins is tilted over at an angle of, roughly, 45 degrees. In the "American," this is produced by the racket moving across the ball both from bottom to top and from left to right at the same time. The ball has forward spin, from server to receiver, and also an impetus from left to right which makes it rotate on an axis tilted over as stated. It swerves in flight from right to left, but "breaks back" on the bound from left to right,—speaking from the server's point-of-view. The receiver sees it curving, naturally, from his left to his right and is surprised that it breaks directly opposite. The reason for this bound is, as Mr. Vaile has so well put it, that: "the ball is spinning in a plane which lies over at an angle of 45 degrees, and when it strikes the earth, it strives very hard to stay in the plane of its rotation." Also this ball takes an erratic curve upon breaking, and is particularly hard to meet squarely with the racket. Bundy finely exemplifies the "Reverse American." Anyone who saw him at Forest Hills last

SERVICE—XIV

This photograph is a most excellent one, showing Thomas C. Bundy at the moment of impact during his famous reverse American twist service. Beyond all doubt, Bundy is the greatest exponent of this reverse service the world has ever known. He has incorporated it so completely in his game that he scarcely serves any other kind of ball and consequently has gained complete mastery not only of direction but the amount of break the ball shall have as well. Notice he throws the ball well out in front of him and to the right but very little above his head in height. His feet are quite close together, all the weight being on his toes, the left foot getting most of it, as the right is just about to leave the ground preparatory for the first step toward the net. His racket has come up on the ball from beneath and will slash across it in a direction toward the camera, finishing way across his body on the outside of his left thigh. This imparts to the ball the severe reverse spin that so perplexes players unaccustomed to this unusual variety of service.

No, Bundy is not suffering from severe headache—this is merely a handkerchief device to absorb perspiration that gathers on the head and prevent it from trickling down into his eyes and onto his glasses.



Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

FIGURE 20

year must have realized what fine control of it he has. He keeps the ball much more in front of him than one does in the "Overhead Reverse." Also he throws it up well to the right. The ball is hit as the racket goes up and across from right to left. Just the opposite things happen to it that occur in the "American Twist." It too breaks back on the bound, only in the opposite direction. Bundy can place this ball almost as accurately as other players can their straight shots. He is the only expert I know who has gained complete mastery of a wonderfully difficult stroke.

The finish and follow through of the "American Twist" service are made on the right hand side (left hand for Lindley Murray, who is left-handed). I finish it with the top of my racket pointed almost vertically toward the ground and with its back face toward the net, as the pictures will show. In Murray's finish the racket is more horizontal. The wrist is twisted over to the side next my body so that the under side of my forearm is turned to the right. Further than this my fist is twisted back to the right from my wrist so that the edge of my racket is not toward the net, but its side. It is a finish that has simply worked itself out naturally for my physique. Murray's

action is somewhat different. But we are both doing the same thing to the ball in slightly different ways. Generally speaking, the other services finish "across the body," either low or high. This depends somewhat upon the physique of every individual person, and let no one diagram my start or finish of the serve and try to pour himself into that mould. It will be disastrous. But the "American Twist" gets its final "work" on the ball through its peculiar finish. The true American service is *an upward hit*, a lifting stroke,—as much so as the forehand lift drive. The body must be more or less bent back, the ball squarely above the head or face; the racket must meet the ball when the body is fully extended, and the stroke be timed so that the weight shall shift naturally on to the left foot and so over on to the right again, in stride for the net, after the ball has gone (left-handers the opposite). You must remember in this stroke that it is extremely important to put what is known as "top" on the ball. You are trying to make it rotate from top to bottom, forward, away from you. At the same time you are giving it a tilted axis to rotate on by your racket moving from left to right with a twist of the wrist for a finish. But un-

less you get that "top" you have nothing much more than an ordinary "Forehand Cut."

A word in closing with regard to using a spin on your service. If you strive to get an excessive "break" your pace is bound to suffer; also you will sacrifice time and add appreciably to the drain on your strength. Unless you have exceptional stamina, and I should but mildly recommend it even then, do not wed yourself to a service that "takes it out of you" too much. The best players no longer try for excessive break on the ball. I try to control the break of my serves, and do not allow it to hamper my speed. Also an excessive break is fatal to good placing of the service. Brookes, as I have said, is an example of the well-placed service, and he only tries for just enough spin. Finally, in match play I never use a great variety of services. Forehand with or without cut, and the American Twist are about all I ever attempt. It is quality that counts, and placing.

RECEIVING—I

FIGURE 21

My partner is serving in a practice doubles and the camera has caught me in a receiving attitude at the net that is adopted just before the ball goes into play. This is a moment of uncertainty in the game, and because of that the mind must be very much on the alert to grasp quickly the sequence of play after your partner has served. This is not entirely a mental attitude, for with this the body must be so poised, the feet so placed, and the racket so held as to permit of the greatest amount of freedom and celerity of movement the occasion demands. In other words, your physical attitude just before the point is played must in no way hinder the muscular response to the dictates of the mind; it must aid in every way possible.

RECEIVING—II

FIGURE 22

Preparatory to receiving the service from around the baseline. In most respects this embodies the same conditions as described in No. I. As in No. I, the body is slightly stooped forward for the purpose of throwing the weight onto the balls of the feet. The feet are spread well apart—not too far, though, so that it represents an effort to start suddenly off one or the other—and the weight is about evenly distributed on either leg up to the moment the ball goes into play. The racket is cradled in the left hand as this facilitates balance, a quick shifting of racket position, and grip change.

RECEIVING—III

FIGURE 23

Receiving the service as in No. II, only the ball is just coming into play, and the weight has shifted onto the right leg, which would indicate that the service is to my forehand. The body has straightened up from the crouched position of the moment before, and the racket is about to leave the left hand for the draw back before the drive. The reason for the weight being shifted onto the right foot is to allow the left side of the body to pivot forward, thus advancing the left leg and shoulder more toward the ball, which allows for better driving position, as explained in the forehand.



FIGURE 21



FIGURE 22



FIGURE 23

CHAPTER V

RECEIVING, OR THE STRIKER-OUT

IN receiving in general I endeavor to take the service at the top of its bound, or just before. The higher the ball is, the more command you have of the opposite court. Brookes and Williams are the two great players who by preference play a rising ball, that is a ball that has not reached the height of its bound,—a method I emphatically do not advocate for the average player. To attain such accuracy as that of Brookes or Williams in this respect requires not only a marvelously true eye but bespeaks long years of faithful practice. The player who strokes the ball on its rise has no time for deliberation. Accuracy must become a matter of second nature, but when once achieved it gives him a tremendous advantage over his opponent. He is enabled to return a service before his rival can get to the net; consequently, he catches the server mid-way of the court and at a disadvantage. Melville H. Long, my teammate, and I, in our early matches with

Brookes were kept constantly volleying "off our ankles." No other player against whom I have competed could keep me so persistently out of set as the great Australian did then.

Naturally I have to take a great many balls on the backhand, but in a match game a player should always seek to play up to his strength, which generally is on his forehand, except in the case of a Pell, who practices just the opposite. He has tended toward neglecting his forehand in past years because of his greater backhand proficiency. In practice, however, it is a great mistake to "run around" the service, as it coddles your probable weakness.

One should always be up on one's toes to facilitate a quick and well-balanced shifting of position. The racket is generally cradled in the left hand for a like reason. I get my racket well enough back to put some pace on the return, and also impart a certain amount of "top" to it. This makes the ball harder to volley because of its sudden dip, and also gives one more margin at the baseline. But I must repeat that it is well for the average player to "go easy" at first as to applying "top," and to strive primarily to meet the ball squarely with the middle of the racket. If the practice is to take the ball at the top of

its bound—and this is by all means the better choice—the upper edge of the racket should be slightly in advance of the lower if the bound is of any height. The racket should be slightly turned over. For, of course, if the bound is of any height, the resulting stroke is in general direction downward, and any rise on the ball must be counteracted.

The placing of a return should never be sacrificed to pace and “top.” Your placing will wholly depend upon your opponent’s style of play, the opportunities open to you at the moment, and other varying factors. Above all let there be no hesitation about what you do. Your best play might be to drive the ball deep to your opponent’s backhand, pitch it about at his feet as he runs in, or toss over his head if he is in fast, but it all depends upon what offers. Your opponent may have a particularly deadly backhand; he may be very swift to follow his service in to the net; his service may break very wide to your right, or vice-versa. First of all make sure of meeting the ball squarely with determination, and *some* purpose, whatever it may be.

The greatest problem in receiving, however, is not anticipating the *kind of serve or the bound of the ball* that your opponent intends to use;

FOREHAND—I

Norman Brookes is here seen about to execute his forehand drive in the International matches at Forest Hills. The ball has arrived at the point at which it will be struck. The weight is being transferred from the left leg to the right as the racket comes through. Note the position of the feet and that he is standing sufficiently clear of the ball to allow a free sweep of the arm. Altogether, this picture illustrates a well-nigh perfect forehand position.

In the background is just a small glimpse of the huge throng that surrounded the match court; also the most excellent high green baize back-stops that afforded a perfect background for the contestants.



Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

it is primarily the *direction* that his service will take. If you have an inkling of this beforehand it is an invaluable asset in getting yourself "set" for the return. And here I have touched upon one of the most vital attributes that a tennis player who wishes to go beyond the average stage must possess: that of "anticipation." This is a peculiar attribute in that it can not be acquired through any amount of mechanical practice no matter how diligent. It is purely mental; invaluable intuition that comes to a player generally as the reward of long and active study. Again it is wonderfully illustrated in the game of the great Australian, Brookes. To those who do not make a study of tennis an impression will be given when watching Brookes play that he only seems to be half trying, yet further observation will reveal that he always gets there. He exercises a faculty that almost amounts to telepathy in this department. On the other hand, during our singles match in 1909, after discovering in the first few moments of play that Brookes' service was dangerous not in its width of break, but in speed and placement, I bent my whole mental energy toward discovering something in the action or bearing of the Australian that would give me an inkling as to where he would place the

ball. I found to my dismay that his physical action differed not one whit when he sent it close to the centre line from that when he sought to catch me out of balance by serving to the outer line. In both instances, too, his standing position was the same. I watched the direction of his gaze and found that, regardless of where his thoughts were centering, he would look far off to the right or left. Eventually I detected that almost at the moment of contact between racket and ball he would shift his glance to the direction which he wished the ball to take. From that time on I watched his eyes up to the last possible instant of time left me—watched sometimes too long, in fact, and was caught out of balance for a clean ace. A match with Brookes resolves itself at once into a battle of intuition with one to whom this faculty is a birth-right and whose sphinx-like face betrays no secret of the mind. Larned, the seven-times champion of America, and one of the greatest players we have ever developed, is another striking example of “anticipation.” He always covered the court with the greatest apparent ease. You had the impression that the ball was coming to him instead of his going to it. As a matter of fact, on the majority of shots, he was at the given position a fraction

of a second in advance of the ball, and the reason he apparently showed no effort at reaching that position was because he started appreciably sooner than the ordinary player. Hence, one can appreciate how valuable it is to have some conception of where the ball is going before it is actually served.

I think that most students of the game believe in the "Centre" theory, viz.: playing the centre of the court to lessen the angle of return. But its practical application never works out equally well with all opponents,—at least such has been my own experience. A very striking instance of this occurred in the most recent Davis Cup contest, in my matches against Brookes and Wilding. Against the latter, the "Centre" theory was invaluable in enabling me at the net to reach his ground strokes. Against Brookes, however, I cannot remember once being conscious of it. Still less am I inclined toward this theory in the Service. As I think I have already mentioned, the complete control of direction for both centre and sidelines is of vastly greater importance. In singles, therefore, the "Centre" idea has its limitations, for naturally the striker-out cannot make effective use of it unless his opponent stays back. Even if he does,

FOREHAND—II

A good deal of discussion has arisen over this picture of myself just before making a forehand drive. At the moment the camera caught me the position appears to be absolutely false, as evidenced by the advance of the right leg. However, on this particular shot I evidently was advancing on the ball, and, had the camera been snapped a fraction of a second later, my left foot, which is seen here to be just leaving the ground, would have been advanced before the right, thus bringing my body around into the proper position before making the stroke. The drawn-back position of the racket indicates that I am going to get a ball that is to bounce somewhere near the height of my waist, which will probably result in a horizontal drive. It must be remembered, however, on an occasion such as this that the racket will not and should not come through on the ball before the left foot has been advanced. The awkwardness and lack of balance in attempting to make the stroke in any other way is apparent.



Photo by Paul Thompson, N. Y.

FIGURE 25

I am a believer in more variation of the return. In doubles, a great many more shots are played down the centre than in singles. This does not necessarily mean more frequent application of the "Centre" theory, for more often you play down the centre between the two men not to lessen the angle of return, but because it is the best, and the safest, place to put the ball.

The most usual return is cross-court, that is, across the center portion of the net rather than up the side lines. The reason for this is natural, for a player is apt to make a large number of his shots through the medium of least risk. Obviously, playing over the centre portion of the net involves the least amount of risk both as to direction and elevation, for the net is lowest at this point. Never try to smash a receive—that is, go for an ace—unless the service comes in such position that the element of missing-risk is considerably reduced. Many players are prone to go for difficult passing shots when off their balance, and the chance against their scoring at such times is enormous. In the case of the volleyer running in, a favorite shot is to drive for his feet. However, this is practiced a good deal more in doubles than in singles. If a baseline man comes in slowly, he invites play around his

feet, and consequently is rarely disappointed. As I have mentioned, I wish to correct any impression that Brookes comes in slowly. His run-in is of cat-like agility, and it was not so much playing his feet that concerned me in returning his service as it was getting the ball somewhat wide of his reach. To make another point, I should not say it is a good general rule to always hammer your opponent's weaknesses unless, of course, your opponent has some very palpable one. It is better tactics to vary your attack, oftentimes even playing through your opponent's strength, and then returning to his weakness. Possibly, at the end of the match, if a summary could be made, you would find you had played the majority of your strokes to his weakness,—but by no means a very large majority. Studying an opponent, ferreting out his strength and weakness is, of course, one of the keys to successful tournament play; but I believe that efforts in this direction before one is actually face to face with the man on the opposite side of the net, are so much time wasted. Instances are rare when one player can map out in advance a mode of campaign, as did Wright when he met Brookes at Melbourne, and adhere to it persistently with success. And Wright, great general

that he was, would have abandoned his first plan very quickly if a better one had suggested itself as the match progressed. Like a skilled boxer, the tennis-player must try out his man by actual contact. If he possess the keen intuition necessary to premiership he will assimilate sub-consciously his opponent's tendencies in the first few exchanges. All previous ideas of play must be dropped the instant they prove faulty. The contestant must be quick to grasp each possible advantage that suggests itself as the match proceeds.

As to general atmospheric conditions, the sun and wind oftentimes materially affect one's game; but in match-play these elements are rarely utilized by a true sportsman against his opponent, and furthermore the rules of the game as far as possible tend to equalize any hardships apparent; for instance, if the sun and wind are worse on one side than on the other, the rule for changing sides after the odd game prevents one player getting more than his share of unfavorable conditions. In another instance, if a player's opponent must look directly at the sun to find a lob, a sense of good sportsmanship will usually prevail, and the other will not increase his lobs. "Noblesse oblige" is the true spirit of

FOREHAND—III

This is a posed picture for the purpose of illustrating my grip for the forehand drive and the average position of the racket at the moment of impact. Note that the upper edge of the racket is slightly advanced toward the ball, which aids in producing the varied amount of top that I impart to all my forehand shots.



Photo by International News Service, N. Y.

FIGURE 26

the game, and no permanent advantage was ever gained by transgressing it.

In closing, the baseline game is almost wholly a bygone in fast play. I shall cover, in "The Volley," the necessity for the striker-out no less than the server to get to the net and hold it whenever possible. The service and first return are really a duel for this prized position.

FOREHAND—IV

Another posed picture, meant to show my forehand drive at the moment of impact, together with the correct body and foot position on a ball that gives you ample time to set yourself for the stroke. When the racket was drawn back the left shoulder was pointed in the general direction the ball was to take. As the racket came through to the position here shown, the body rotated at the waist so that the chest is now almost where the left shoulder was at the start of the stroke.

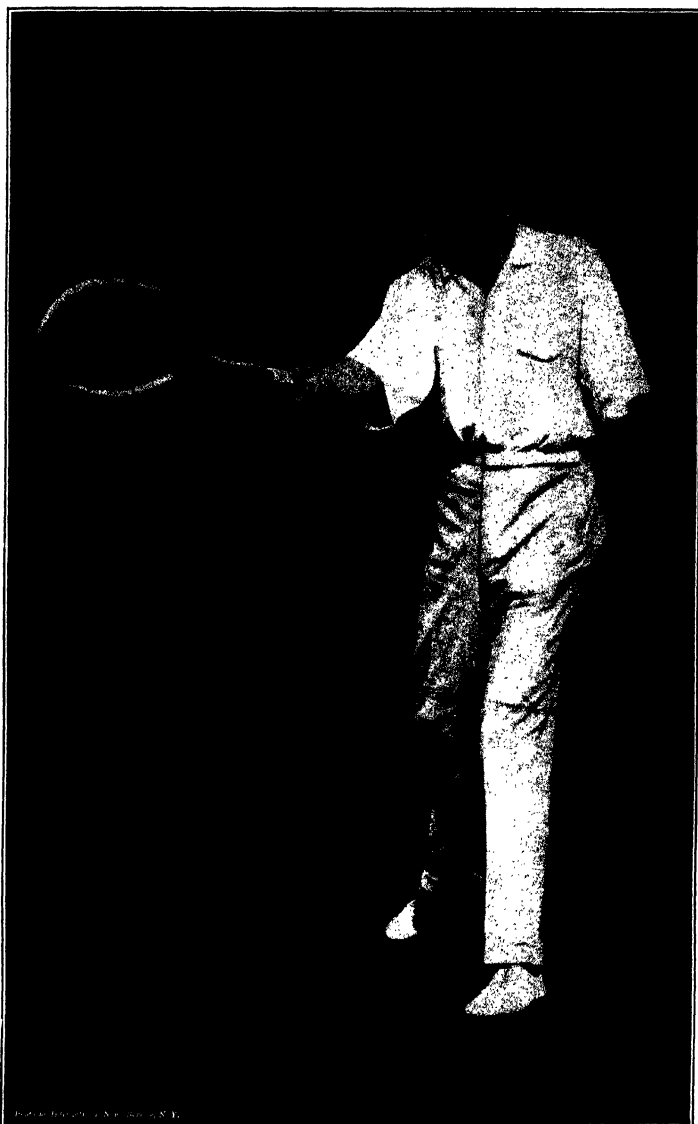


FIGURE 27

CHAPTER VI

THE FOREHAND

THE average player is naturally stronger on his forehand than on his backhand. In both strokes the position is *sidewise* to the net, and the ball should not be played too close,—preferably near arm's length. At the end of your reach you can make a full swing. Cramped action is fatal. Poor form in general is caused by the player falling into cramped positions. The ball should also be played a little in advance of the body. This does not mean, however, that you should reach forward before the ball is hit, as such a move would naturally ruin your swing. Neither should you allow the ball to get past your body before hitting it. It should be fairly opposite your body, but a trifle in advance. You should have your left shoulder pointed down the line of flight along which the ball is coming. In other words, the body, edge-forward, should be parallel to the line of flight of the ball. The swing should be free and natural, the weight at

first evenly distributed on the balls of the feet. In your swing back your right foot will bear most of it. This foot will be about parallel to the net; the left foot in advance and at somewhat of an angle. The feet are about eighteen inches apart as a general rule. The weight will be transferred from the rear foot to the foot in front as the stroke is made, and a good player will be found "advancing on the ball." Your feet do not necessarily have to be perfectly stationary, but it is essential that the stroke be "timed" accurately so that it gets the advantage of some body-weight and the proper loin rotation. It is well to have the forearm as much in line with the racket handle as possible when racket meets ball, but there is no hard and fast rule.

I put a varying amount of "top" on all forehand strokes, depending entirely on the speed and depth I want the ball to have. The forearm principally imparts this spin to the ball, which is, of course, sent away rotating forward or "top first" from the striker. This makes the shot "dip" or "dive" rather suddenly, and when it bounds it goes faster than a straight drive. But exaggerated top will slow its flight. The drive is more of a sweep than a hit, as in golf, and the

finish should be well after the ball and not primarily across the body. My attention was once called to a lady player at ——, a very good forehand shot, but her position was directly facing the coming ball, and in her swing she did not turn her body at all, *striking directly against herself*. Needless to say this is a "horrible example" of what to avoid.

The steps to learning how to apply top are, first the vertical upward movement of the racket from below the ball and across it; then the combination of this motion with a general forward movement of racket and arm; third, whatever additional wrist-work comes naturally and effectively. By a slight lifting of the racket at the moment of impact more or less top is imparted, and its use certainly makes one's stroke easier to control. Wilding says that he likes to "feel the ball on his racket" before imparting this over-spin. Personally, I think the correct "feel" of the stroke has much to do with its success, but the racket must of necessity be at the same time moving forward and upward across the ball.

In this connection the remarkable forehand grip of May Sutton (Mrs. T. C. Bundy) comes to mind. I should describe it as follows: In the case of the various great players I know, if, when

FOREHAND—V

This illustrates my follow-through on a forehand drive such as shown in Figure 27. It is in the short distance between these two racket positions that the greatest amount of power is imparted to a forehand drive. It is also the time the direction of the ball is controlled. Note here that the body has completed its rotation at the waist, thus imparting a certain amount of body weight to the ball through this rotary movement of the back muscles.



Photo by Paul Thompson, N. Y.

FIGURE 28

holding their racket for a forehand drive, they should extend their arm as though to show you their grip, the head of the racket would be seen to be either edge up, or with the upper edge slightly inclined toward the ball. In the case of Mrs. Bundy's grip, on extending the arm in the same manner, the upper edge of the racket is so far inclined toward the ball that it virtually amounts to holding the racket face-up. In order to lay the face of the racket back so as to allow impact with the ball, her wrist is turned back and under. As the stroke goes through, and at the moment of impact, the wrist flicks around into its natural position. In this manner the excessive over-spin is imparted. I do not know of any other great players who use this extreme hold. Many, however, use its modifications. William Johnston, whose forehand commands a great deal of respect, is among these. My own forehand grip, as the pictures will show, is of the same nature.

What is known as the English forehand ground stroke is like a sliced drive in golf, that is, instead of top being applied at the moment of impact, the racket is drawn across the ball, imparting slice. For this stroke it is especially important to be at a proper distance from the

FOREHAND—VI

This was snapped on the match court at Forest Hills during the International matches, and illustrates the completion of my forehand drive on a high bouncing ball. On a ball that comes like this it is naturally more difficult to get a great amount of power into the stroke because the rotation of the body at the waist is eliminated to a large extent at this elevation, and the only body power that can be imparted is through weight transference from the right leg to the left as the racket arm goes through. Observe that the weight is entirely off my heels, being distributed on the balls of the feet instead, as it should be.



Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

FIGURE 29

ball in order not to be hampered. The ordinary ground stroke does not impart either top or slice, and is a perfectly straightforward underhand swing, the racket being started back at about shoulder-height; the weight at first (as in the other strokes) being on the right foot, and shifted as the swing goes through with a straightforward finish. In the ordinary forehand drive the finish is somewhat more across the body, and, naturally, the more horizontal the stroke is the more exaggerated such a finish becomes. Horizontal drives do not get as effective a lift.

Most emphatically one should always follow through. I said I should enlarge upon this point, and certainly in these few words lies one of the most fundamental principles of the game. In almost every game of science this principle must be mastered in order to attain big results. In tennis it consists of the ability to let the racket go through to the natural completion of the stroke, and not to hold it up during any stage of the swing immediately after impact of ball and racket, a common and fatal tendency. Some call it "letting the racket do the work." Throughout all the strokes in tennis, variations of the same principle are ever present. One exception is in

FOREHAND—VII

Here is a very good illustration of my forehand return of service which was taken at Wimbledon, England, during our matches there in 1913. Quite an idea can be gained from this picture of the tenseness, concentration and power that must be put into a stroke of this sort. During the actual execution of the stroke every muscle must be alert and respond as spring steel. Even the left arm and hand, which only served as a guide and balance, have become rigid and so tense during the actual making of the stroke that the cords and muscles can be plainly seen in relief. This is a good time to observe, however, that this tenseness must only exist during the making of the stroke. Utter relaxation at all other times is of primary importance in resting the muscles and conserving the energy. The racket here has completed its follow-through and with it the body has rotated at the waist. For ideal driving position the left foot might be a little further advanced and the feet not spread quite so far apart, but it must be remembered that this is a return of service during a match of vital importance and more often than not at such times you are not permitted the time or opportunity to perfectly set yourself for the stroke.

A glimpse may be had in the background of the great crowd that thronged the enclosure around one of the world's most famous match courts. Also may be seen the wear and tear on the turf just back of the baseline. Most of this wear comes about through serving.

FIGURE 30



Photo by Paul Thompson, N. Y.

FIGURE 30

the stop-volley, when you employ methods directly opposite to the follow-through with a view to deadening the ball's flight, like the bunt in baseball. But the follow-through exists in all other volleys, and is of primary importance. It is this fact that a great many net players fail to realize. If they think at all about the follow-through, they associate it only with strokes that require a full arm swing. The follow-through on the volley is only a matter of inches, yet in just this small, but important, feature hundreds of volleyers fail. Their volley stroke is in the manner of a poke,—quick stabs here and there at the ball, that carry no weight behind them because the racket is checked immediately on impact instead of the head being allowed to go through in line with the ball's flight for the smallest fraction of a second after it is struck. I shall recall this to your mind when I treat of the Volley itself, but it illustrates the great importance of "following through."

Another very important point in the mastering of ground strokes is the concealment of direction; that is, being able to make a shot straight down or across-court, as the case may be, so that it is not perfectly obvious to your opponent which you intend. The most common method of

FOREHAND—VIII

I said in describing forehand Figure 30 that time was not permitted me to perfectly set myself for that drive. In this picture I have been given that opportunity and the poise and balance of the resulting stroke is easily apparent. Perhaps the reason for it in this case is that the picture was taken during the warm-up just before my match started against Brookes, at Forest Hills, Long Island, in 1914. At such times the ball nearly always comes in the desired position, for there is never any attempt on the part of either player to put it out of the other's reach.

Two of the linesmen may be seen in the background taking their positions, and the crowd are gradually settling into place before the match is on. It isn't that some of them fear rain—more that the sun's rays must be reckoned with, for they surely were penetrating on this day.



Photo by The Historical News Co., N. Y.

concealing direction is the slight turn of the wrist a fraction of a second before, and during, the impact of the ball and racket. This wrist variation is so slight and delicate that it is difficult to adequately describe. In fact, it is one of those finer points of finish in stroke technique that generally only come in advanced stages of development.

“Good length” in ground strokes is worth cultivation, but when playing against sound, aggressive net players, one never gives very much thought to his length; then it is placement and keeping the ball low that figure most prominently. Length is only important when your opponent is in the back court. However, the average player, when developing his ground strokes, should first give his attention to the length he is getting, as the short angle game is considerably easier to acquire. In general, swing easily and naturally and do not attempt too much at first. Watch your position and train your eye to take the ball at the right distance. As in the serve do not try for top and pace too soon, and, when you acquire these, keep them well in control. Your forehand might be called your most natural stroke, and a trained eye and timing sense will work wonders.

FOREHAND—IX

The plane of force is every varying through which the racket and arm travel in making all the different forehand shots that arise. This is due of course to the fact that the ball scarcely ever comes twice alike, and you must adapt your stroke each time to a new situation. In this case, it has been necessary for my racket to finish over my left shoulder. Evidently the ball was a deep one, for I was forced to hit it with almost all the weight on the right leg. It can be seen that the weight transference has not been quite completed, and yet the stroke has. This form of follow-through would tend to indicate that I have played a cross-court shot rather than straight down the line, as the racket would naturally finish more across in front of the body for a cross-court drive than for one straight down.



Photo by Paul Thompson, N. Y.

FIGURE 32

CHAPTER VII

THE BACKHAND

STROKES on the left-hand side of a right-handed player, and vice-versa, are taken in what might be called the most “unnatural” positions in tennis. The back-swing is much more hampered than in any other stroke. The strength of the wrist is much more in demand. The back is more turned toward the coming ball. The racket meets the ball farther from you. All these things make the ordinary backhand stroke an awkward one, and in the early stages of one’s game it is naturally a defensive stroke. Speaking in general it remains in the nature of a defensive stroke in most English play. This can somewhat be accounted for by the English principle of wrist below racket-head (which causes an angle between the racket-handle and the forearm), and by the fact that there is a noticeable lack of top on the English backhand. If anything, the tendency is the other way, and they impart more or less backspin to the ball,

which causes it to "float" in the air with a flight that is very straight and true. Because of this such a stroke is the easiest of all to volley, and the hardest with which to command any very great variety of angles as the ball does not drop quickly enough. The Doherty Brothers were largely responsible for the modern English style. Needless to say their own backhand work was far from weak, and as I have mentioned before, I have met players with the English type of backhand who made it a stroke not to be trifled with. Freutzheim, the German player, is an excellent example. For this reason I recognize its value and should hesitate to inveigh against it. There is no doubt, as far as keeping the wrist low and the racket horizontal are concerned, that this manœuvre checks one's speed when running in for low backhand volleys. Nevertheless, the more vertical racket in such an instance is more dangerous to control.

The backhand has become a beautifully offensive stroke in modern American tennis. T. R. Pell is probably the most striking exponent of this. He can hit with equal ease from all positions, and has sufficient speed combined with wonderful accuracy. His stroke-form is perfect. C. P. Dixon, the old English champion, and J.

C. Parke, the Irishman who beat Brookes at Melbourne, used the "Doherty" backhand style which Pell does not favor. He plays with racket-handle and forearm in the same "plane of force" as Vaile would put it. And certainly his is a style worth everyone's cultivation. Generally speaking, the English style of backhand favors the use of the full arm in volleys on this side, while the Australians depend more upon the forearm. But, with the latter, the body-swing also has free and full play, and their weight is behind the stroke. As to the position of the feet, the right side is naturally turned toward the net, and the right foot should be in advance of the left when the stroke is played. In a hot rally one may be caught out of position, and, if the left foot is in advance, the stroke is naturally hampered considerably. But this detail of keeping the left leg back out of the way really comes under the matters that are governed by subconscious control. As your stroke develops such things automatically take care of themselves. The force of the average backhand is in the elbow and forearm, but a rigid wrist is required. The finish should be strong and correct. In regard to the use of the thumb up the handle, I do not employ this grip person-

FOREHAND—X

This was taken during my match against Stanley Doust at the West Side Club in New York in 1913 during the preliminary round of the Davis Cup Matches against Australasia. Doust possesses a very puzzling forehand cut service of which he has remarkable control. It takes a decided swerve in the air and when it hits the ground the ball has a low shooting bound which is very difficult to handle accurately. On this occasion he has served to the extreme side-line, thus forcing me several feet off the court to handle the return. Indication of the low bound above mentioned may be determined from a study of the position of my racket at the finish of my forehand shot. The stroke was evidently a quick lift, as the racket has finished directly over my right shoulder.

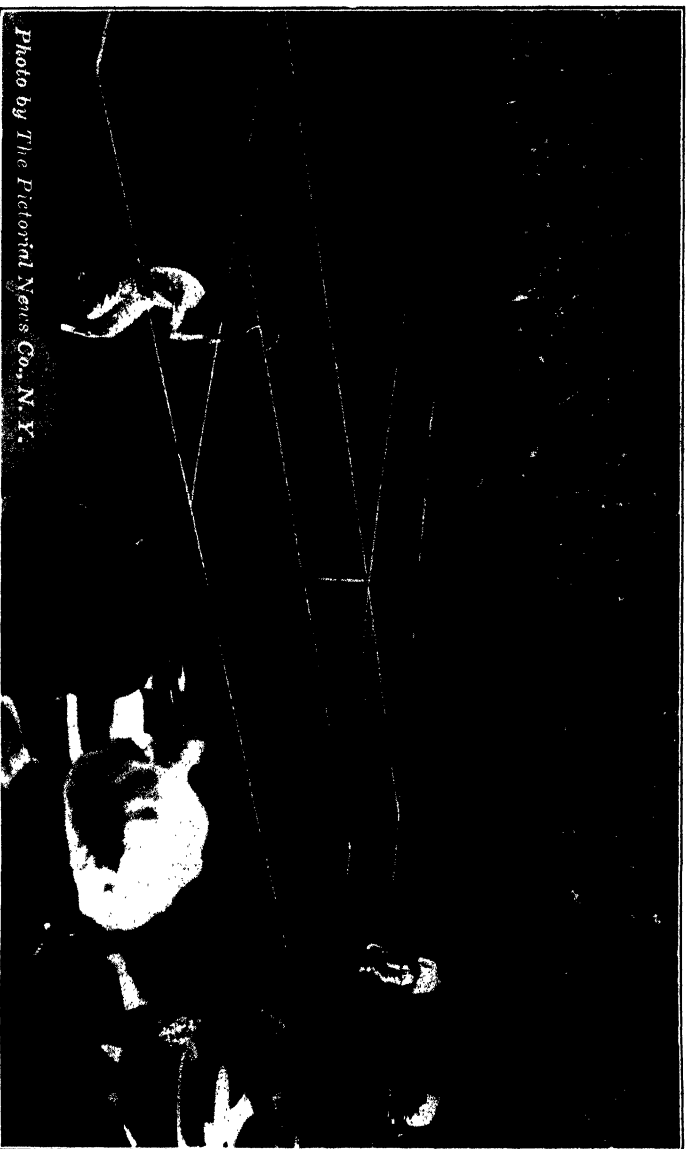


Photo by The Pictorial News Co., N. Y.

ally, but from observation should be inclined to advocate it if it comes naturally to the player. It has never fitted in with my grip for other strokes, and the change for me is so unnatural that I have never cultivated it. Most players, however, use the thumb up the handle and feel that it assists in guiding the direction of the shot. The inclination of the racket varies, of course, with one's intention. Practice soon establishes the angles at which the ball will rebound in certain ways. Just as we calculate angles in billiards, so the trajectory of the approaching ball in tennis should be borne in mind; and common-sense will tell how the racket should be angled to counteract whatever spin the ball has and return it to the spot desired.

If a category is wanted, I should say that there are four distinct methods of executing a backhand stroke. One is the English backhand, second the stiff-arm block type, third the free-arm type where elbow, forearm, and wrist operate together to give top to the ball,—and last the slice type where underspin is imparted. I shall at once admit the weakness of my own backhand. For a great many years I used the fourth type above-mentioned. It has very definite limitations, and as soon as I reached larger

competition I realized that a radical change should be made from under-spin to a trifle over-spin. As the under-spin was accomplished by a slight flick of the wrist, I encountered much difficulty. My wrist is even now too flexible just before and during impact. This is a very natural fault, as wrist flexibility figures most prominently in nearly every other stroke I make. At present my own backhand is quite inadequate, however. I cannot control it properly when I hit it hard enough to be effective. It is not my idea of the range of a perfect backhand that it be as effective as the forehand. But an adequate backhand should be a good offensive stroke when the ball comes in proper position, and also a stroke whose direction may be controlled. Beyond this it should be soundly defensive, with control of the lob or toss, and strong in volleying power. The photographs in this book should be studied particularly for instances of varying backhand grips. The easy, graceful shots in perfect stroke-form will be easily distinguished. The stronger and surer grip will show in the poise of the player. Each individual will have to work out his own method of changing grip from the forehand. The hand in which the racket is cradled may

prove an aid, but the natural turning over of the forearm, bringing the same face of the racket in use for the backhand as is used for the forehand, will probably solve this problem. The wrist should be made as strong as possible, and the ball hit with courage and conviction. I often smash a ball backhand, but only balls that come high and rather slow, with a somewhat flat trajectory. I volley an equal percentage on both sides. As I remarked in *The Service*, do not practise "running around" a stroke to your backhand. In practise at the present time I endeavor to take the majority of ground strokes on my worst side. It is not as pleasant, but it is the only way to learn.

FOREHAND—XI

This picture should be viewed in connection with Figure 24, as it shows the progression of Brookes' forehand drive to the follow-through stage on the same stroke. The ball has just been struck, in fact it has only left the racket a few feet and may be distinguished in the left centre of the photograph as a white blur. Brookes' weight has not been entirely transferred onto the right leg and the stroke is being completed in faultless form. Notice that the upper edge of his racket is advanced, thus indicating his having imparted a certain amount of "top" to the ball.

The photograph was made during the warm-up, just before Brookes and myself started on our match. Standing behind the green baize just to the left of the ball boy with the white hat is Robert D. Wrenn, president of the National Lawn Tennis Association, who, having completed the many irksome duties that fall to the lot of the referee, is about to settle in a chair on the sidelines among other interested spectators.



Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VOLLEY

WITH the former section in mind, I may say immediately that it is by no means advisable to favor either one side or the other in the Volley. The Volley is supposed to block or give the quietus to all strokes attacking the player at or within the service line. The racket must be equally agile to get the ball on either side. Whenever possible the volley should be taken well within the service line. If played too far back the ball comes to your feet. This involves the stoop for correct position, checking one's run in, which I have already spoken of. There are cases, of course, when it is best to volley even then. In such cases you must make the best of it. But by all means do not be caught back of the service line if you can possibly help it. I wish to recall to your mind here that the net position is of supreme importance in the modern game. Therefore, command of the volley is absolutely essential. Also I would

remind you of what I have said in a former section concerning the follow through of volley strokes. This is a much-neglected and most important principle. It calls for agility to recover position for the next stroke in a hot rally, but also it is the only way to make a volley shot truly effective. It should be constantly practised.

In America and Australia volleying has entirely superseded the old-style method of baseline play. Larned was equally superb in both positions; yet when he was "sitting tightest," he was up to the net like a cat when the chance presented itself, and at the net he camped. All the present-day stars, with the possible exception of Wilding, the Australian, who is not always eager to take the net, strive constantly for this position. Richard Stevens, a famous back-court player in his day, developed the baseline game to a nicety. He could return anything and everything with such precision that the linesmen had to be constantly on the alert. No man of his time achieved more remarkable accuracy. Yet the players of his generation smothered Stevens' game by moving up to the net, and he was beaten constantly by men whose accuracy could not approach his. On the Continent and

in England there are still some very strong baseline players, one or two that are not only capable of being champions but really are and have been in that class, for a number of years. I refer in particular to the great Irish player, Parke, and the peer of all German players, Freutzheim. The body of the game of these two players is composed of offensive ground strokes. Neither one is known very often to force the net play. However, these two great players are unusual exceptions and one finds both in England and on the Continent a great many who possess strong ground strokes and have rested content with this amount of development; thus, though they are not exactly "back numbers" on account of it, their ability is limited to barely first-class tennis.

There is a basic position in the court for volleying. It is the one a player leaves when jumping to one side or the other for different shots. It might be described by students of angle as a position opposite the angle formed by the preceding shot with the length of the court. The volleyer moves in toward the centre of this angle. In the majority of shots this centre is approximately the centre of the court. This is particularly true when one takes the net after a service,

FOREHAND—XII

Warming up for the doubles match against the Australians in the Davis Cup contest of 1914. My partner, Bundy, may be seen just back of me turning to receive a ball from the boy. The forehand stroke I am here making is very similar in type to that of Brookes' in Figures 24 and 34. The racket is just about to come onto the ball, which has arrived at the point where it will be struck. Notice that that position is slightly in advance of my body and that I am standing sufficiently clear of the ball to allow my right arm to come through with perfect freedom. Simultaneously with my racket the weight is coming forward onto the left foot from the right, thus imparting that body-force which is such an important factor of power in a stroke of this sort. If all my forehand strokes could be made in as true form as this one I should be well content. Unfortunately, when the ball is in actual play it does not arrive so often in this made-to-order manner.



Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

FIGURE 35

and is clearly illustrated by a grass court that is badly worn. You will notice on such a court that where service line and centre line meet there is always a bald spot, and you will further observe that, in taking the net, a player usually runs forward to exactly this position, from which he then changes his direction to one side or the other as the case may be.

As a rule it becomes more difficult to volley a ball the lower it is taken. A ball coming straight at one, breast-high, puzzles many players to handle offensively. But others prefer a close ball, and will move into a position in which they must take the ball directly in front of them, rather than handle it at one side. The Australians particularly are very adept at this volley method. As to placing the ball, there can be no definite rules, but I favor mixing one's volleys considerably, playing some short, some long, and some with a wide angle. This naturally depends upon your own judgment and your own individual opponent. A low hanging chop, for instance, is difficult for many players to meet, but a Parke or a Brookes would make it quite ineffective. Under ordinary conditions for a normal volley my own position is between five and ten feet inside the service line. As I

FOREHAND—XIII

Another glimpse of the famous centre court at Wimbledon, England, during one of my matches there in 1913. This is a forehand return of service during the actual play and I have not been permitted the opportunity to perfectly set myself for the drive, due probably to a fast, unexpected service to my forehand. Contrast this picture with Figure 35. It will be seen that if I moved at all I had to move sidewise onto the ball and was given insufficient time to properly advance my left leg coupled with a body-turn which would bring me more "edge on" to the ball, as in Figure 35. Notice that the follow-through on this particular stroke is more in the nature of a lift, which was doubtless caused by the service taking a low, fast, shooting bound.



Photo by Paul Thompson, N. Y.

have observed many players, some of the first class, it appears to me that many fail to appreciate the importance of what we might term the "in and out" position for volleying, as well as the ability to move sidewise. Such players are constantly being forced to make a high percentage of low volleys which are admittedly more difficult, whereas if they would study the proper times to close in nearer the net their troubles would vanish. The volley should not be made flat-footed. Otherwise, every time you move, two motions will be involved; first the one of getting off your heels, and then the position change. Unless the weight is evenly distributed upon the balls of the feet you will be badly handicapped. As to the fear of lobs, overhead work has always come to me very naturally, and I, personally, cannot remember any time when such strokes bothered me; but every individual player must use his judgment as to the risks he can afford to take, and it all depends on how effective the lobs of your opponent are. If he gets you chasing back and forth, you are gone. Better stick to the net until you find that he is entirely too accurate at putting them inside court but out of your reach. Then formulate some opposing campaign.

FOREHAND—XIV

Champion Williams at the finish of one of his forehand drives. One wonders in studying a finish like this where the remarkable power comes from that he gets on his drives. As I have said elsewhere Williams is the only great player who may be classed with Brookes in the art of playing the rising ball. It is because he stands in so close to the ball that he uses what we might style as a "short-arm" stroke. In the first place, he hasn't time to take a full-arm swing and, in the second place, having judged the ball correctly and timed it accurately, he does not need such a swing, as the force of his opponent's stroke is absorbed by his own and enters immediately as a factor governing the speed of the return. Thus it is that the faster the shot that Williams plays on the rise the faster it is liable to be returned. Coupled with the above-described element of force that enters into Williams' ground strokes is also the whippy flash of the arm and racket onto the ball with a remarkably rigid wrist at the moment of impact. The wrist must be unusually firm in his style of play, otherwise the force of the oncoming ball would be almost certain to deflect the racket head if the ball struck the slightest bit off centre. He also possesses form that is almost perfect, and it is rarely that you see him make a shot from a false position.



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FIGURE 87

In regard to the various types of volleys, I have already dealt with the stop-volley used so effectively by Beals Wright. Karl Behr is an exponent of another particularly difficult variety: the drive volley. I know of few other players who approach any degree of certainty with it, and I most heartily condemn its use for the average player, as it is a stroke that, at best, is difficult to control. My own style of volley is the stiffer-wristed type,—that is the wrist is iron-firm at the moment of impact. Brookes possesses great command of well-angled volleys executed with a flick of the wrist at the moment of impact. A chop volley is often used when you wish to impart a faster, lower bound to the ball. I make use of it a good deal. It requires, however, more precision of stroke and a more flexible wrist than the usual block type. The half-volley is really more a ground-stroke. It is like a drop-kick in football, or a “pick-up” in baseball. The racket strikes the ball just as it has barely risen from the ground. It is a very difficult stroke, and I should not advise the average player to spend much time on it, but in the advanced stages of development it can be very useful in helping one out of many a predicament, and for general defensive purposes. One

of the best half-volleyers I know of is the English veteran Dixon. Personally, I have occasion for this stroke quite often, although Americans do not use it nearly as much as do the players of other countries. This shows more particularly in their doubles play. The half-volley is hardly ever an aggressive stroke. There is only one player I know who makes it so by preference. This is Caridia, the English player. When one gets to the stage of being able to place the half-volley consistently he may well be proud. Dixon has accomplished it. I often use the lob-volley, but this is another stroke that I should not advise the beginner or even the average player to spend much time in cultivating. It is not one of the major strokes of the game, and, on the other hand, is most difficult to acquire. From the point of view of the practised volleyer's opponent, I may say that it is better to forestall such a man by taking his service on the rise, or at latest at the top of its bound. Later than this he will have had time to establish himself at the net and thus gain a great advantage. I have mentioned Brookes in this regard, and R. Norris Williams.

CHAPTER IX

LOBS, CHOPS, AND SPINS

THE lob, except perhaps for the smash, easily leads the tennis-strokes neglected by the average player. Like the half-volley, it is almost entirely a defensive stroke, and yet it is very difficult to master. I am making more use of it in late years than I used to, for I have discovered, through study of opponents, that a properly-timed lob is every bit as effective, and sometimes more so, than a beautiful passing shot. When I was substituted for Larned against Brookes at Christchurch, N.Z., in 1911, my slighting of the lob told against me. I have a greater respect for it now. Personally, I am a believer in practising a lob with the idea of getting the proper length and height, and of acquiring the "feel" of such a stroke. Good, consistent lobbing is largely a matter of "touch,"—which means the feel of the wrist and arm when the right amount of force is behind the ball. I do not believe in putting very much cut on a lob.

FOREHAND—XV

Here we have Wilding's full-arm follow-through on his forehand drive. Wilding plays a very deliberate stroke at the top of the bound and it is interesting to note and compare the wide differences in this style with that of Williams. We have also a fine example here of the rotation of the body at the waist to give added force to the stroke. At the start of this drive Wilding's left shoulder was advanced toward the coming ball and here we see at the finish of the stroke that his body has turned to the extent of even bringing his right shoulder through in advance of the left.

A white band will be seen around Wilding's right wrist. This was a device with which he contrived to absorb the perspiration that gathers on the forearm and trickles from the wrist into the hand, thus causing the grip to be insecure. Whenever tennis played where humidity exists in the atmosphere this is a very annoying condition to be overcome. I believe Wilding later gave up the use of a wrist band, not being entirely satisfied with its success.



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FIGURE 38

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A simpler and more accurate method of making the ball drop straighter is to lob higher. Putting cut on a ball simply adds an element of uncertainty to the shot. The high, deep lob is naturally the ideal one. However, there are exceptions when you wish the ball to bound away faster after it has passed over your opponent's head, the idea being to prevent his having time to run around the ball. Such a lob is played with a flatter trajectory, just beyond the opponent's reach. I should say lobbing is more in use now than formerly, and has become more of a fine art, chiefly for this reason. It is because of the increased amount of net playing that we see an increased amount of lobbing. Unquestionably the best lobber I know of is Beals Wright. Nat Brown, one of Southern California's stars, is another exponent of this style of stroke. Wright is the only player I have known who has converted the lob into an offensive stroke. He has done this by cleverly mixing his short, chop strokes by which he draws his opponent closer to the net, and then, apparently with the same stroke, playing a high, deep lob. Thus the latter often sails over his opponent for a clean earned point. He will deliberately pop the ball up into the air, even when in perfect position.

FOREHAND—XVI

A strenuous moment during one of my Davis Cup matches at the West Side Club in 1913. It illustrates one of the countless number of positions that the strokes of your opponent will force you into. This was evidently an angle shot which I was just barely able to reach by running directly across the court. The drive was made right in the middle of my stride, which in this instance was directly at right angles with the direction of the ball, thus eliminating almost all the effects of body weight from the stroke. The force of the drive in this instance must come for the most part from the sheer power of the arm swing. At the same time, in making a stroke like this, foot work is of vital importance, as it affects your body balance at the moment you reach the ball, and if you are off balance at this time it is almost impossible to swing the arm through with any amount of force. In this instance I chose to play the shot straight down and the ball has left my racket several feet and can be plainly seen speeding down the side line. Whether it hit the net or went out of court, I can't remember.

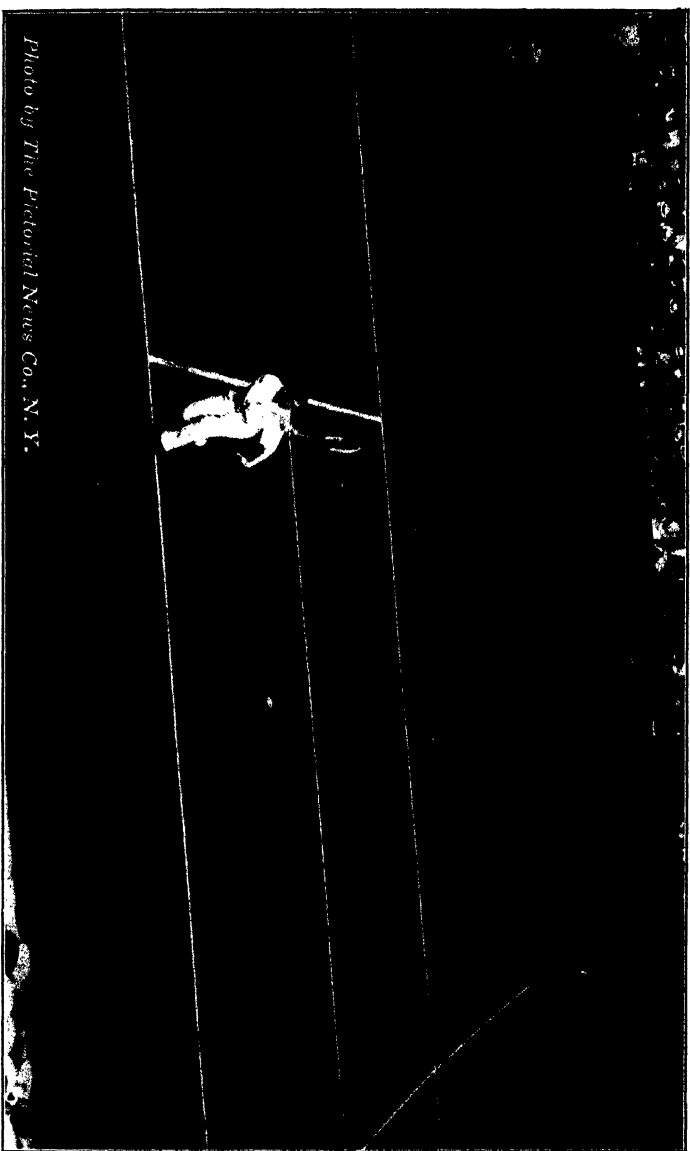


Photo by The Pictorial News Co., N.Y.

FIGURE 39

During his famous five-set match in Melbourne in 1908 with Brookes, when he defeated the Australian, Wright lobbed constantly, and to this, in great measure, he owed his triumph. Before that contest the American had competed against Brookes in various tournaments and had defeated him, I believe, in three out of five matches, and always through superior strategy. Knowing that Brookes possessed none too great stamina, and in the course of five sets might be brought by clever manœuvring to the point of exhaustion,—and knowing also that the Antipodean was his master in the matter of stroking, Wright mapped out a plan of campaign for the Melbourne struggle which had for its sole object the tiring of his rival. As he laconically expressed it afterward, “I played for his stomach!” Wright alternated a high, deep lob with a short chop over the net, keeping Brookes first craning skyward in the back court, and then bent double in a sprint up to the net. For the first two sets Brookes outplayed his rival in every department of the game, and in the third he was well in the lead. Then, suddenly, he began to tire, his game faded, and the American evened up the score, eventually winning the set. From that time Brookes, although in distress, put up

FOREHAND—XVII

A posed picture for the purpose of illustrating the extent of my "draw back" preparatory to a forehand drive when given plenty of time to get set. A point of error may be noted in this picture in regard to the proper distribution of weight at this moment of the stroke. At such a time more weight should be on the right foot than on the left, which is not the case here, where my weight has been transferred onto the left leg too far in advance of the racket.

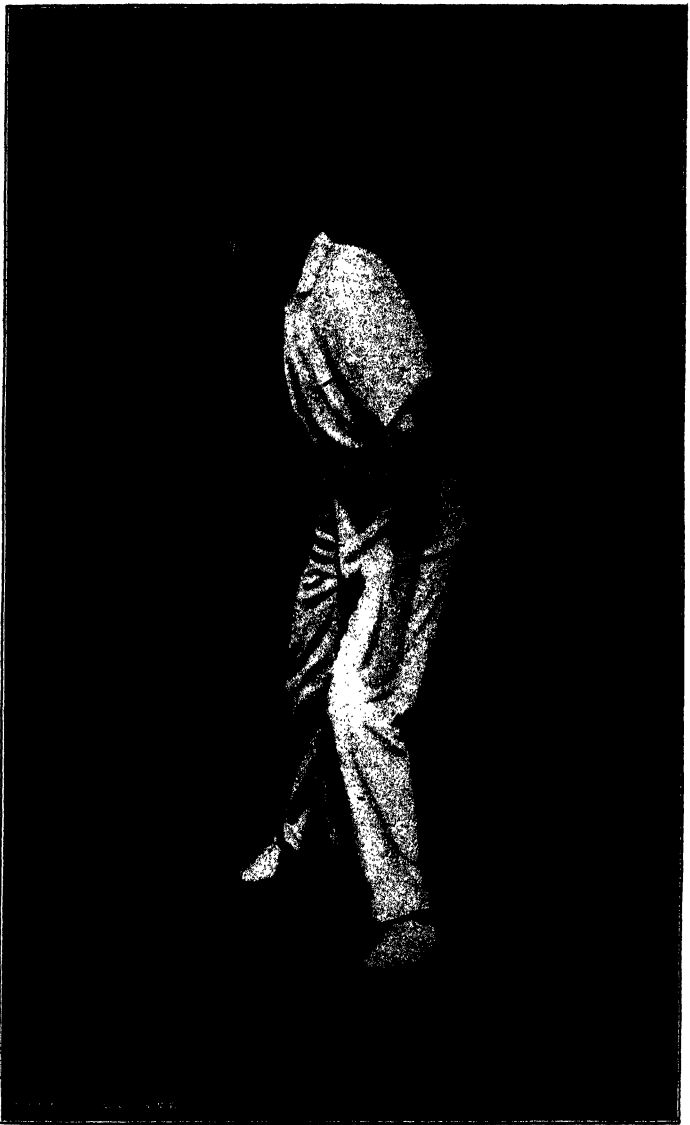


FIGURE 40

so superb an exhibition of stroking and placement that Wright, despite his superior physical condition, took the last two sets only after long and gruelling struggles. In like manner the former American champion disposed of Wilding, the New Zealander. Wilding played a brilliant game, but Wright succeeded in outpointing him by employing every trick of the trade. Wright had no great ground strokes. He wonderfully developed his telling chop, however, and made it count tremendously by varying its length and speed, as illustrated. He was especially efficient at chopping short over the net. This faculty, with his attacking lob, gave him a complete—if unique—armory of strokes. He was always in direct contrast to Larned, who gained his victories by steadily out-stroking his opponents. Wallace Johnson of Philadelphia also commands well played chops of varying length. Certainly they put a base line or play-back opponent in an unenviable position. But, of course, the entire effect of the chop stroke is lost unless the ball is allowed to bound, and it is—alas!—one of the easiest for the net player to volley, mainly for the reason I have already given: that a chop ball's flight through the air is very true, and that

BACKHAND—I

The finish of Williams' backhand stroke taken during the warm-up prior to his match against Wilding in the Davis Cup of 1914. Here may be seen very clearly Williams' thumb-up-the-handle grip, which is of the English and Continental type. Again may be judged, as I have already observed with regard to his forehand, the short arc through which his racket travels in making the stroke, also how he carries his follow-through across in front of his body. He puts little or no "top" on his ball, and this is evidenced by the position of his racket at the end of the stroke. If he had put top spin on this drive his racket would now be in a position with the upper edge turned toward the ball. In other words, his racket would have "turned over" on the stroke.

A study of his foot position and body balance reveals a point to be avoided whenever possible in making a backhand stroke. In fact, this photograph is the exception, as Williams is seldom guilty of error in this respect, for I have referred several times before to the very excellent form with which he makes all his shots. The point of criticism that I wish to bring out here is that he has made his stroke entirely from off the left leg, his body not having entered into the shot at all, since there has been no weight transference onto the right. Probably in this case Williams was forced to step back by the deep bounce of the ball at the same time as he was called upon to make the stroke. Still, I may be forgiven for using this as an example of what not to do when the ball comes that gives you time to set yourself.



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FIGURE 41

it does not tend to drop as fast, owing to its under-spin.

I should hesitate to advise the beginner to experiment very much with the various kinds of spin that are put on the ball. Too much of that is bound to be detrimental to the development of sound tennis strokes. A certain amount, of course, is essential for the execution of the various shots that require it, but it is very easy to form the habit of putting excessive spin on the ball, which is a great mistake. I know of a certain player who decided that his forehand drive needed more top-spin. Instead of trying to bring this change about slowly he "played with fire," and began getting excessive lift on his drive. The consequence is that his drive is now all top-spin and has little or no forward speed. The whole effect of his stroke is entirely lost.

The cardinal point to remember in getting top-spin on service and other strokes is to reason out just what position produces it, and how the racket must come on the ball to achieve the desired effect. Top-spin in a tennis stroke may be compared to the follow-shots in billiards. To produce this last we must cue the ball above center, thus imparting top-spin to it. In a tennis stroke, likewise, we know that to put top-spin

on the ball the face of the racket must move across it in a certain manner. The wrist in this shot plays a larger part than almost any other one portion of the arm. All forms of control of the ball are more natural on the forehand side, and therefore, it follows that the backhand lends itself less easily to top. Under-cutting is a bad habit for a beginner to fall into and I should unhesitatingly advise him to put in the time in acquiring top by preference. At the same time, as I have already observed, he must be careful not to develop it too far. A slice volley is unquestionably a good stroke to develop. The same advice holds good for this as I have given for cultivating top. Be careful not to undercut the ball too much in cultivating this volley.

In regard to learning to acquire spin, when one must go about it, I remember when the ambition was born in me to try and learn a twist service myself. At that time I was no student of spin, swerve, angles, etc., and it was only through close observations of just how certain players were hitting the ball to get that break that I was able to develop a semblance of their service. Then when the trick of putting the proper spin on the ball had come to me it was just a case of constant practice and hard en-

deavor to incorporate it in my swing. Slowly I began to acquire more and more control of this ball and had increased the break of the bound from less than six inches at first to between two and three feet. Then as years went by I began to make more of a study of the effect my service was having on my opponents; also the effect it was having on me. I found that the excessive break did not fool a good player so much after he had become accustomed to it and yet in order to acquire this excessive break I had to sacrifice a great deal of speed. Furthermore, this service entailed a tremendous amount of physical strain, especially when it had to be sustained through a long match. That is why in an earlier section I mention the fact that in late years I have largely eliminated the break on my service and proportionately increased its forward speed, coupled with a more complete control of direction.

BACKHAND—II

This is an excellent picture of Wilding's graceful backhand finish, taken the day he played Williams in the 1914 International matches. His position and balance here could hardly be better, and it will be seen that his weight has been shifted completely onto the right foot as the stroke has gone through. A comparison with Williams' finish brings out the point that Wilding's racket turns over considerably more than his opponent's, which would tend to impart more top to the ball. Also his stroke goes through further, although Wilding's backhand cannot be described as a full-arm sweep such as Pell's.

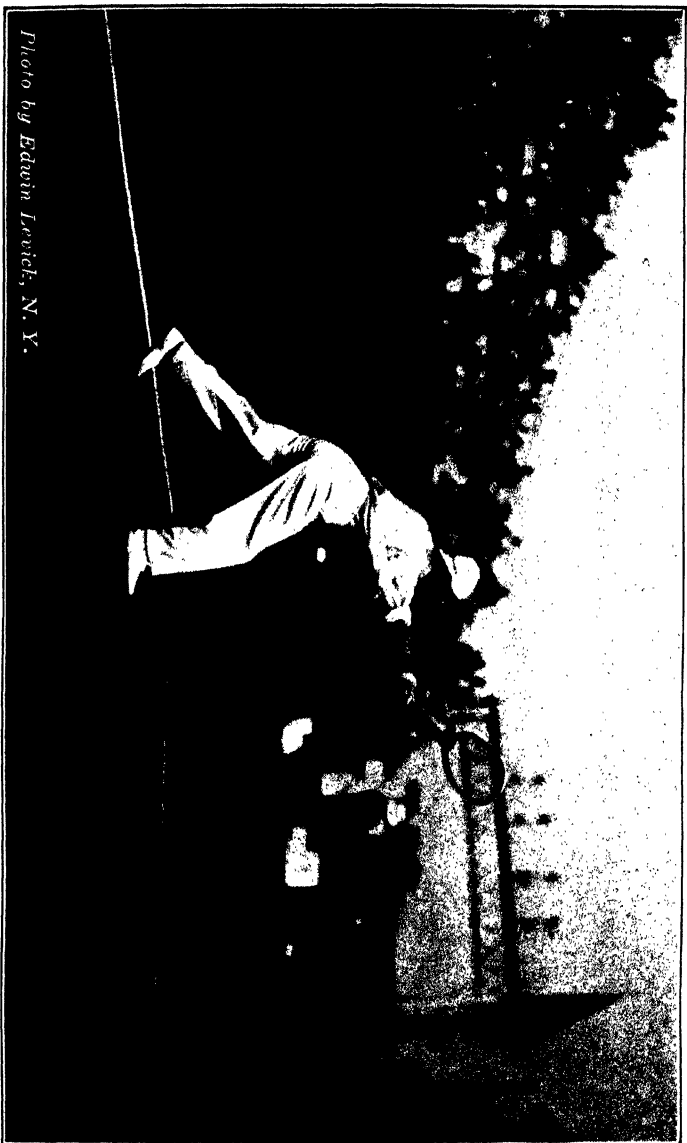


Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

CHAPTER X

OVERHEAD WORK—"THE SMASH"

CONFIDENCE, like proper timing, is an element that enters into every shot in tennis, but for effective overhead work it is absolutely essential. Usually what we speak of as "overhead work" is the disposition of high returns from one's opponent which would fall inside one's baseline,—attempts to lob or toss over one's head. An effective smasher will meet such attempts on the fly with both pace and place. It is easier to cover a deficiency in this department than in one's ground strokes, and, of the two, ground-strokes are more important to cultivate; but a vital lack in overhead work will find one out. It is therefore necessary to cultivate the confidence I speak of, for that quality does not always go hand in hand with ability. I have seen players who hit well overhead go utterly to pieces through lack of faith in themselves when a lob went up to them. The mind must be schooled

as well as the muscles; in fact one's attitude of mind is a tremendous factor in all expert tennis. It is called upon even as the prize-fighter's is called upon when his opponent endeavors to illustrate the slang phrase "getting his goat" by taking advantage of certain peculiarities of fist-tic temperament. But the tennis player's mind is of a more nervous kind naturally. He is usually a college-trained man of some imagination. His senses are subtler; his fibre is finer. It is harder for him to keep absolutely cool and collected under a rapid-fire attack. Naturally the temperament of the individual takes a hand here, and each one must work out his own particular method of tennis salvation. Trusting to luck will, of course, not prove dependable. But if he has the natural or trained ability to carry through the shot he should hazard something. Otherwise too great caution will keep him in a lower class. Eagerness goes with tested confidence and ability, and some of us even leave the ground to "get an ace." The leaping "smash" may be called an individual characteristic. Owing perhaps to the court factor in Californian tennis, which I have already dealt with, almost all the players I have in mind who leave the ground for their "finish off" shots are Califor-

nians. My doubles partner, Bundy, is one of these. I should not advise the average player, however, to cultivate such a method unless, as in my own case, it comes to him easily and naturally.

There are two general types of smashes. The straight-arm type is possibly the safer, and perhaps less liable to fail one in the long run; but I am, nevertheless, an advocate of the free-wristed type, which sets greater speed and a greater variety of angles at one's command. The strength of the wrist is a decided factor in the ability to take full advantage of the angles open, for a weak or undependable wrist may ruin a well-planned shot. As for the rest you must throw yourself into the stroke with every intention of making a return impossible.

A frequent question is: when do you gauge your opponent's weakness and decide on the place to drive the ball? In general the lob always gives you time to judge your opponent's probable position and make up your mind as to the general direction of your stroke. As the moment of impact approaches these matters are relegated to the realm of subconscious control and the conscious mind is entirely concentrated on the execution of the smash. A plan may be

BACKHAND—III

It may be well to give this picture consideration in conjunction with Figure 42, as it shows Wilding's racket to be in a very similar position, only taken from the other side. Like Williams, he uses a grip with the thumb up the handle, although he does not execute the shot in anything like the same style. On this particular shot, which was taken during the doubles on the second day's play of the Davis Cup matches of 1914, the ball has forced Wilding somewhat off his balance. But at the same time his racket and arm have gone through on the ball true to form, even though insufficient time was given for him to properly set himself. Wilding's backhand is not of the extremely offensive type, but with it he is absolutely sure and almost as accurate as a baseball player would be were he allowed to throw a ball across the net. He just plays them fast enough so that when an opening presents itself he either scores outright or the return is so defensive that the point is easily earned on the following shot.

The stroke, in a way, may be described as a sort of "shove"; the beginning of it is not very far back of the ball. He meets the ball squarely, as though he were going to block it back, then shoves the racket through with a firm thrust in a general line of the ball's flight. The arm, which was bent back at the elbow at the moment of impact, is extended out straight as here shown, at the same time with a forward movement of the right shoulder. In this photograph the ball was taken at a point in the air about where his left hand is now seen, although, of course, further away from the body, which would be nearer the camera. With this in mind, one may trace what I have attempted to describe above as the "shove" in Wilding's powerful backhand stroke. It must be borne in mind also that he maintains an unusually stiff wrist throughout the shot, which turns over slightly on the follow-through.

FIGURE 43



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FIGURE 48

changed by intuitive judgment at the last possible instant before impact, and a twist of the wrist "finish off" on a somewhat different line from the one first planned. A lob with flatter trajectory may give you less time to judge. But usually a trained eye and brain will put you in possession of the possibilities offered, and narrow your choice immediately to the best chance, and the ball itself will then receive your undivided attention. All your "figuring" will be done with lightning swiftness; the next instant you will be flashing into the stroke. And that moment is the moment you need infinite faith in your own ability and unconquerable determination. The work of the wrist in the free-wristed smash may be compared to the "snap of the wrists" in a golf stroke. In the case of the straight-arm shot the movement is more of a sweep with the whole arm. Possibly the free-wristed type is a trifle more difficult to time. Proper timing simply comes through long association of your swing on the ball with a certain definite point overhead. Only constant practice can develop proper timing.

In regard to one's position in the court for smashing, it would be bad practice for the average player or the beginner to attempt smashing

BACKHAND—IV

In the foreground T. R. Pell is seen making a backhand stroke for which he is famous. He is here playing with Karl Behr during one of their doubles matches at Seabright, N. J., last year. The ball has just been struck and the racket is about to go through to a finish such as shown, in Figure 45. He hits his backhand with remarkable freedom that is not a characteristic of either Williams or Wilding. He starts his stroke from well back and carries it through with a beautiful, smooth sweep, his arm and racket always keeping in the same general plane of force. His racket appears to have come onto the ball almost flat in the picture, but were this photograph taken a little further back we should see that the upper edge of the racket would be slightly advanced toward the ball, as he plays most of his shots with a slight amount of top. The position here is excellent, and the weight is seen coming onto the right foot as the racket goes through.



Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

when too far back. The nearer the net, the easier the "kill." I sometimes smash far back in the court, but the best way for the average man at first is to play the ball back safe and deep and wait for a shorter lob. A smash does not necessarily imply that the ball is unusually high, for at times, especially near the net, you will smash a ball down in front of you that was scarcely above your head. A ball of this nature is nearly always hit harder than in any other stroke of the game. But in general one may say that a player should always be fully extended for smashing. Certain balls may be smashed on the backhand, and I sometimes use this stroke, but it is a rare one, for it calls upon one's wrist to stand an unusual amount of strain. A high, deep, straight-dropping lob may be smashed but it is usually wiser to play it safe and wait for the next. As to smashing high bounds, Beals Wright is the perfect exemplar of this fine but difficult stroke. He finished them off from the back court with unparalleled ease.

Mention of Beals Wright necessitates the statement that, to my mind, he stands out as one of the greatest if not the greatest smasher that the East has ever developed. His smash

may be classed as one of the full-armed type minus the free-wristed whip that we Californians use. His ball takes a very deep flight and an extremely fast bound,—the type that is hardest in the world to handle. Of the present day Californians, Strachan and Johnston are both deadly overhead and kill from all portions of the court. They use the free-wristed smash and hit with a form somewhat similar to my own, although they may not leave the ground as often as I do. In Wright and a player like Johnston, therefore, you have the two different types of this great stroke contrasted on their merits. After all it is the man behind the racket, and not the type of stroke he uses, that is the determining factor.

CHAPTER XI

DOUBLES

TENNIS doubles is a study in itself. There is such a wide difference between team play and singles that they may be considered as distinct from one another as is tennis itself from cricket or lacrosse. Of course the rules of the game are exactly the same except that the territory is larger and two men alternate the service on the same side of the net. There is no difference in stroke technique. But a good team player, while needing all the strokes that the individual has use for, employs them with another object in view. He must remember at all times that he has a partner. In singles he seeks only to win the point. In doubles he tries much of the time to "set up" the point for his partner's "kill." The first-class doubles player must be absolutely unselfish on the court. Just as a football player, reluctant to yield the ball to a comrade because of his hope that he may achieve a long run to his own personal glory, often tosses

away the chance for a goal; so the tennis player who is greedy of laurels will, in a doubles match, make futile trials at "aces" rather than place his partner in line for an easy kill. A man can be a good singles and a good doubles player at the same time, or he may be excellent at doubles and poor at singles, and vice versa. Usually he is content to play well at one of the two and does not attempt the other with any great ambition. Singles, I should say, is far preferable for the beginner. It brings out a man's individuality far more than is possible in the game with a partner. To become an expert doubles player demands specialization in its peculiar necessities. I venture to say that doubles requires a greater variety of strokes, because the ball is necessarily more in play between four men and consequently more situations arise which call for widely different kinds of stroking. Doubles brings the lob far more into play, all partners must be experts at this method of defense, and, in the English and Australian formation, which I shall presently explain, the half-volley is of much value. The understanding of position is very important in the game of four. A great many doubles players do not understand this. For one thing they do not volley close enough to the net. In

the pair game shots are, in general, played with a more varying length, and the shot that drops quickly to the opponent's feet is more effective than in singles. The short-length shot is at a premium also. The constant endeavor is for a team to play their returns to prevent their opponents having the "down stroke."

In an effective doubles team the men have worked together long enough to come to a mutual understanding as to who takes the ball under certain definite circumstances. They are really unconscious of their team-work. They are simply components of a well-oiled machine. Hackett and Alexander, the American doubles champions for four successive years, may be cited as attaining the perfection of team-work. Each appears to know intuitively what the other is going to do. Theirs is team-work not only in action but in anticipation. Their minds work together. They cover the net position wonderfully well. Not only does Hackett know intuitively what Alexander is going to do, and vice versa, but their brains work as one in anticipating their opponents' intentions. Thus one will leave his own court entirely unprotected to assist in covering his partner's half against an attack not yet under way. On this marvelously

BACKHAND—V

T. R. Pell at the finish of one of his magnificent backhand strokes. I have said in my text that the forehand is the more natural side on which to play the ground strokes, but in Pell we find the great exception that proves the rule. This, unquestionably, is the greatest backhand drive ever developed in America, and is second to none in the world. Somewhat at the cost of the other departments of his game he has brought this stroke up to a wonderful degree of accuracy, and his control of speed as well as direction is great. Here is a stroke by all means worthy of emulation, and lucky is he who attains anything like Pell's proficiency.

His grip with thumb up the handle is plainly shown. Also notice how close to the end of the handle he holds his racket and the extent to which he has turned it over on the ball in the follow-through, thus imparting considerably more top-spin than either Williams or Wilding does.

In this picture Pell is running straight toward the camera. Apparently his footwork is faulty, as the right foot seems crossed over in front of the left, and all the body weight appears to be on the left, when it should be on the right. But this is a case where appearances are deceiving, for in this stroke he is running diagonally across the court, which gives the impression of the right leg being crossed in front of the left. Owing to the fact that he is running forward onto the ball, there is by no means any dead weight settled on the left leg. In fact, his body weight is advancing correctly on the ball, even though his stride is not completed on the right foot. Had he not been forced into moving before and during this stroke the position as here shown would be faulty.



Photo by Paul Thompson, N. Y.

FIGURE 45

intuitive team-work rested the fame of the unconquerable Dohertys. As an English friend once expressed it to me, they were "pretty snug players at the net." Naturally, to attain this high degree of doubles efficiency there must be a perfect understanding between the two men and each must be thoroughly acquainted with the other's game, its strength and its weakness. Annoyance on the part of one is bound to affect the play of his partner as well as his own game. Harmony must rule. During an actual contest there should be little spoken between the men, and what is spoken should always be in the nature of encouragement rather than of criticism.

Another factor in the excellence of the Hackett-Alexander type of combination is that Hackett, a cool and steady player, always the same under all conditions, serves as the balance wheel of the team. Alexander, on the other hand, is more temperamental and rises to tremendous heights of brilliancy, at such times scoring outright point after point. It is in Alexander's lesser moments that the strength of Hackett's game is felt. He bridges over the gaps of depression in his partner's game and proves in time of need his possession of many invaluable doubles strokes. The two have tongue and

grooved their game through years of association. Behr is the brilliant member of the Pell-Behr combination, though Pell's backhand work is, of course, marvelous. But Behr is also the more erratic of the two. At his best he is superb, but Pell has his work cut out for him on Behr's off day. In general, I believe that the players of a doubles team should be of different types, that is when their different styles of play more or less balance. It is easy to see that against a team in which both players are of the same type, their opponents will find it easier to gauge their game; for the enemy have really only to get used to the methods of one man to have the whole box of tricks, whereas in the case of a team of different and balanced styles there would be two individuals to watch and forestall throughout the whole match. Of course the ideal balance comes when both players are about equally rounded out in the doubles game, in a combination such as that of Wilding with Brookes, wherein strength is equally divided and handicapped by no weaknesses. In the great majority of cases, however, each player possesses strokes some of which are a Doubles strength and some a Doubles weakness. But if the strength of one player definitely offsets a certain weakness on the part of his

partner, proper manœuvring will, with practice, protect the weakness of each by the strength of each, and it will be very difficult to hammer such a team consistently at any given point.

There are three essential features of good doubles play: ability to cover the net position well, good smashing, and good service. A doubles team can never lose if it holds its service. Service and the net position go together, the initial stroke giving the server the opportunity to reach the net where his team-mate is already stationed. The placing and varying of the doubles service is as important as in singles. We have seen that the centre theory is really no theory at all in regard to the service. Control not only of a centred service but of side-line service as well, and the variation of these, is what counts. On the other hand, a centre drive is not only the safest return, but oftentimes the most effective in doubles. If well placed between your two opponents it tends to draw them together and give you a better opportunity for an effective angle shot. In leaving the doubles service I may mention an odd formation that originated, I believe, in the East. The service partner is on the same side of the court with the server. It is sometimes useful when one's op-

BACKHAND—VI

Posed to illustrate the position of my racket approximately at the moment of impact when making a backhand shot. Also to show my grip for making this stroke. Notice the upper edge of the racket is inclined toward the ball for the purpose of imparting top-spin, also that my forearm and racket handle are in the same general line, with the wrist well behind the racket, which grip I am a firm believer in for putting a maximum amount of power into the shot with the least amount wasted.

FIGURE 46

BACKHAND—VII

I would suggest that this picture of my backhand low volley at the moment of impact be studied in conjunction with Figure 56, as it represents exactly the same conditions, only the ball is taken on the other side of the body, which brings the right foot forward as well as the right shoulder. The extent of my grip change is quite apparent and I would add that I use the same face of my racket for both forehand and backhand volleys. For the backhand volley *especially* I am a firm believer in keeping the wrist well in back of the racket handle as it unquestionably aids one in the command of the ball and gives an invaluable element of firmness and solidity to the racket at the moment of impact without which no volley is ever much of a success.

FIGURE 47



FIGURE 46

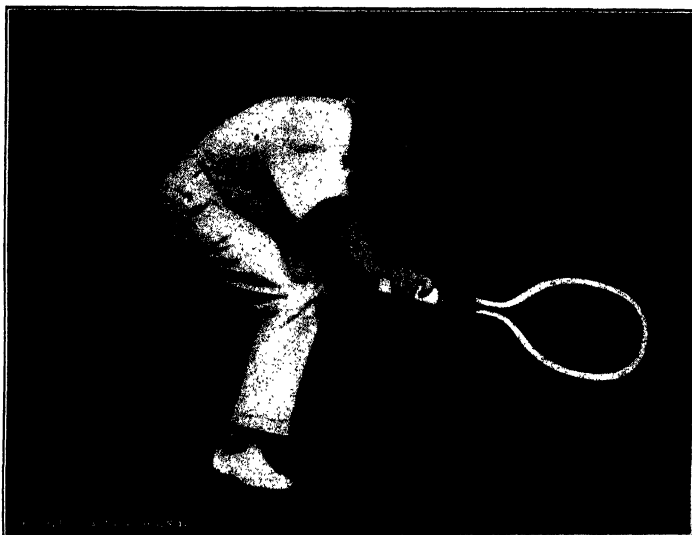


FIGURE 47

ponents possess unusually deadly cross-court strokes and are not so proficient at playing them straight down the sidelines. In such instances with this formation the net-man is in line with the angle of almost all cross-court shots. It sometimes effectively breaks up the cross-courting of the opposition. But on the whole it is a freak of tennis.

In dealing with the reception of the service in doubles we have the English or Australian formation to consider. Many teams in Australia receive their opponents' service with one man on the baseline and another at the net, and this fashion is popular in England. It seems to me a weak formation. First, on returning the service the receiver must take the net at once. If he succeeds in getting there without being passed, well and good, but more often he will be caught in an awkward position by the server's partner who already has the advantage of being at the net when he is coming in. Second, the return of the service must be sure, well-placed and kept low, for the striker-out returns the service following in to the net on his return and joining his partner already there. If his return of the service is low and well-placed, his opponent must volley up, and the striker-out and his partner

BACKHAND—VIII

This is another pose picture to show my racket and position at the stage in my backhand shot after the ball has been struck and just before the racket is to turn over in imparting "top" to the ball, finishing as shown in Figure 51. The body weight has shifted from off the left leg onto the right.

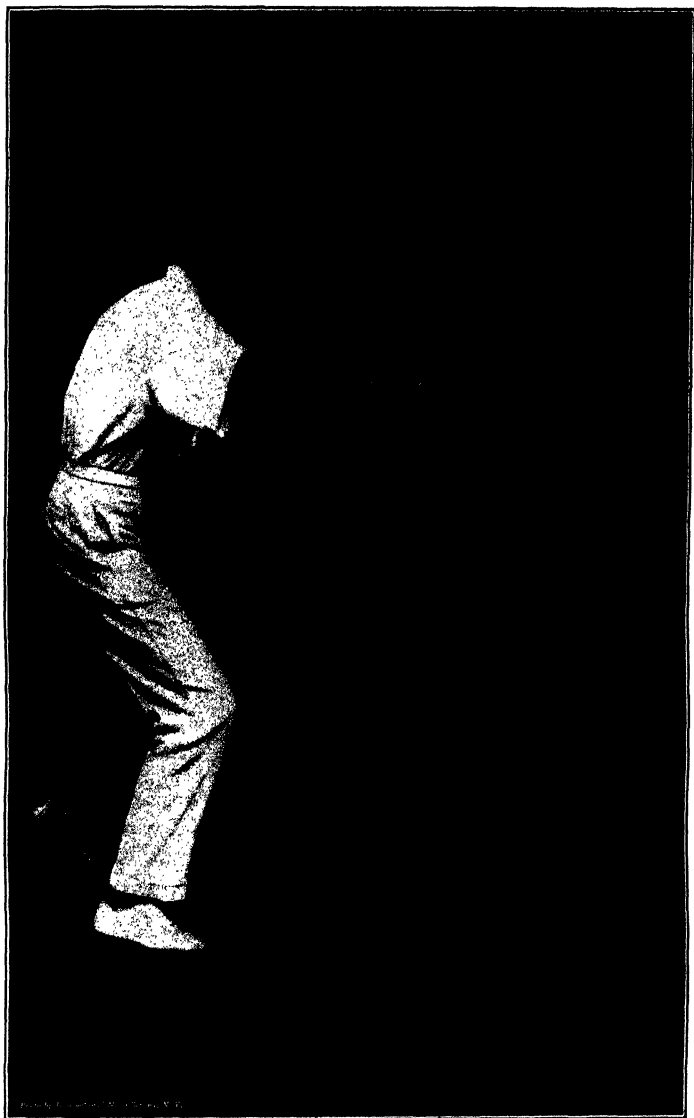


FIGURE 48

are given the down-stroke on the next ball hit. But if the striker-out's return was high over the net, the down-stroke is immediately given to the opponents with the corresponding advantage. A third point is that, with this formation, the receiver and his partner must be adept at the close-in style of volleying. There is no doubt that, provided the players are thus adept, the style is very effective as it brings an added element of offense into the play. But as the opposition is already established at the net through the medium of the service, there is bound to be a call for close-in volley of an unusually fast and difficult description. Also there is much half-volleying, for which reason doubles players abroad are more proficient in this difficult stroke than are American players. Personally, I certainly set more store by the parallel method, and believe that the proper defense in doubles play is both men at the baseline to start with. But thereafter the receiving side should overlook no opportunity to wrest the advantageous net position from the opposition. Bundy and I use for the most part parallel positions and, of course, the follow-in to the net by the server. Pell and Behr and Hackett and Alexander employ the same methods. My partner and I do

BACKHAND—IX

This was snapped on the famous Longwood Cricket Club courts in Boston and shows my finish of a backhand drive, with the racket turned clear over after having put a good deal of top on the ball. My thumb-around-the-handle grip, as contrasted with those of other players shown heretofore with the thumb-up-the-handle, may here be noticed. There is one point of criticism in regard to the action of this picture that I would like to bring out. It isn't so much the position of my feet, which seems to be fairly correct, or that I have not transferred the weight onto the right leg. The point is that there is a distinct purpose in this weight transference which is lost here entirely. Transferring the weight from the left leg onto the right should be a component part of the stroke, and should work together with the racket and arm as they go through on the ball, thus giving added power to the shot when the racket and arm go through at a given speed. Here there is every indication of these two units of force working entirely separately, instead of in perfect unison as they should.



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Figure 49

not play with any set rule as to the handling of lobs. The player who takes the lob is the one in the best position for it. As I have mentioned, the hard, deep drives of singles are not nearly so effective in doubles. This is principally because a deep fast ball has necessarily a more sustained and a straighter flight, and therefore is the easier to volley. In order to score, the placement of this shot must be perfect, for the two volleyers at the net, with only an added nine feet of width over that of a singles court, combine to make ineffectual a ball that would be well enough placed to prove effective in singles. By all odds the quick-dropping return with its wide range of angles is more effective and useful in doubles. This is the reason for the failure of many high-class singles players in the four-men game. They are unable to sufficiently vary their stroking from the customary depth to the shorter, quicker dropping variety of return.

Unquestionably Australia leads all nations in doubles play. I have seen more good teams and examples of good team-work among the general run of players down there than anywhere else I have ever been. I am not prepared to advance any good or obvious reason for this; it is just my observation of conditions. The

BACKHAND—X

This is a posed picture for the purpose of illustrating the extent of my drawback for making a backhand when given ample time to set myself before the ball arrives, together with the position in which I place my feet and body for such a stroke, the right shoulder being pointed toward the ball.

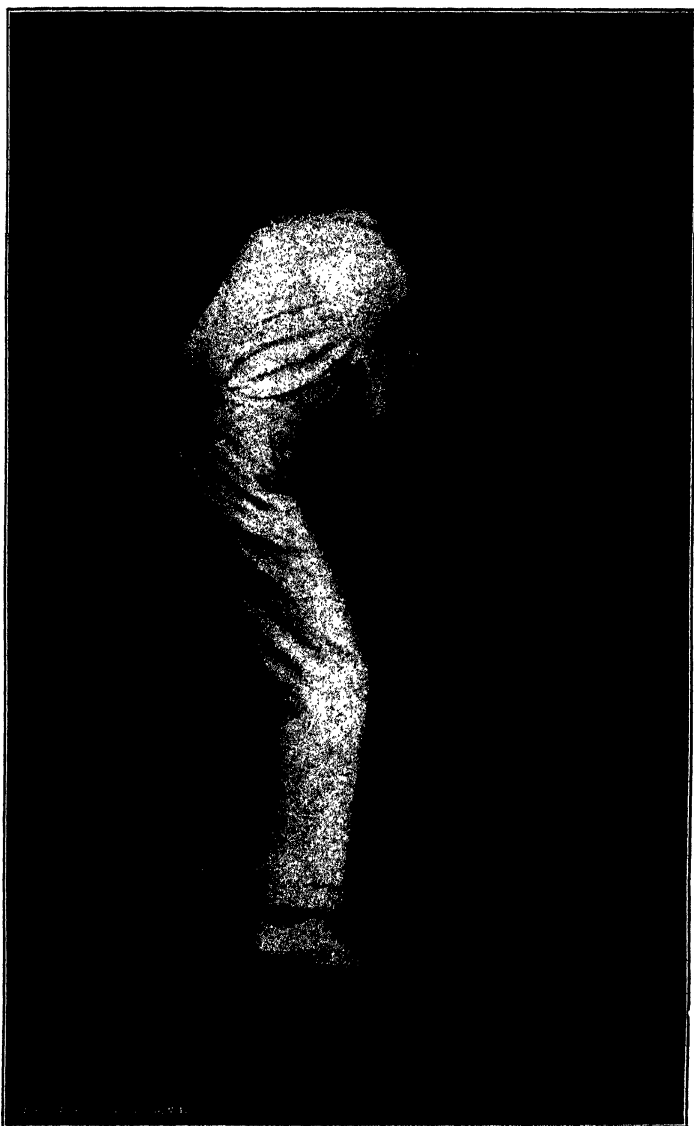


FIGURE 50

strongest and best work in doubles I have ever seen or played against was last year during the internationals against Brookes and Wilding. That day they were everything a doubles team should be, without a single weak link in their chain that could be detected. Of the teams I saw abroad the two that stand out in my mind as working together most smoothly, were the Germans, Rahe and Kleinscroth, and the veteran English combination of Barrett and Dixon. In the doubles play of the former much is seen that is characteristic of their race and training. There is a military precision in the firm, crisp way that they go about the business of a doubles match. It is only in such a team as Barrett and Dixon that you discover the net game can be played in England as well as other countries. Barrett is unusually proficient at the net and is easily the finest volleyer I saw in England. Dixon's position at the net is, for the most part, considerably further back than Barrett's and it is owing to this that he gets so much play to his feet, which results in the necessity for frequent half-volleys,—of which stroke, as I have said before, he is a master. Both teams are not what you would call brilliant, hard hitters; their efficiency is in unusual steadiness and accuracy.

BACKHAND—XI

Posed to illustrate the finish of my backhand under the same conditions as described in Figure 50. The weight has been transferred onto the right leg and the body rotated slightly at the waist as the right arm and shoulder go through to this finish.

(I may add that my most beautiful backhands are made in these posed pictures, just as the golfer always drives his longest ball with his trial swing on the tee.)



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FIGURE 51

CHAPTER XII

PRACTICE AND TRAINING

ONE of the most essential points that occurs to me in discussing the right kind of practice is never to play the game when not in the humor for it, or when in a state of partial physical exhaustion. If a player would only form the habit of always stopping when there is still a desire left for more it would aid him beyond anything else I can think of. Playing too much tennis at one time, and too often, brings about excessive heart strain together with too great a physical tension generally. Even though a player is able to stand this strain, he will inevitably go stale. This is the greatest misfortune in tennis as in all other forms of athletics. In the past I have had one or two very severe lessons of the kind, and ever since have been especially careful in avoiding a recurrence of staleness. I remember an instance a few weeks before the first Pacific Coast Championship I ever won, in 1907. My tennis had gone

hopelessly stale. Each day that I went out to play the desire was there, but no longer the muscular response that the game demands. At the time I did not know what was the matter with me, and a few days later it so happened that we packed off to the mountains on a short camping trip. This environment took me entirely out of the atmosphere of tennis, and two weeks later, on returning to the courts, I possessed an almost unbounded enthusiasm. With comparatively few days' practice before the championship, my game came back to form by leaps and bounds, which resulted in the best playing I had ever shown up to that time. Another thing that a great many players fail to appreciate the importance of is the care of their digestion, especially during tournament season. Personally, I am not an advocate of any rigid form of diet, but I am a firm believer in the importance of eating the more simple forms of cooking, and, still more, in the combination of foods that are taken at the same meal. As no two people are alike it is difficult to state just what these combinations are. Experience and self-analysis really decide this for each individual. You may be sure, however, that if the slightest thing is wrong with the stomach it not

only affects your eye, but more, your entire muscular response. Another important point is frequency of play. This does not mean excessive play, however, and it is the recognition of the difference that causes one to be beneficial and the other injurious. A most natural tendency for one keen about the game is to play too much at one time, as well as frequently. He gradually knocks the edge off his game in this condition, the tennis he plays is doing more harm than good.

As I have said, always seek, when possible, to play against someone better than yourself or at least as good. One finds so many beginners who by preference play with others weaker than themselves, to satisfy a foolish vanity for always being the winner. Get out of this common habit of letting the desire to win at all costs predominate in your practice games. You will gain far more by paying attention to the practice of strokes, and not favoring your best ones either. Of course, I do not mean that this should be carried to an extreme, for it would tend to eliminate the element of interest and fun in the game, and without this element no player will ever get past the beginner's stage. Go to tournaments outside of your own town! Do not be content

BACKHAND—XII

Champion Williams is here seen at the finish of a backhand executed in perfect form. A comparison with Figure 41 brings out his superior balance and foot work in making this stroke. The ball evidently was rather a low bouncer, as his position is slightly more stooped than usual. However, this does not detract in the least from the beauty of the shot. Foot work is well nigh perfect, the weight having come well onto the right leg, and the finish of the stroke leaves him perfectly poised so that there will be no necessity whatever for effort to be expended in recovering his balance. The photograph was made on the beautiful turf courts at Seabright, N. J., in one of the matches of the tournament there in 1914, which he won.

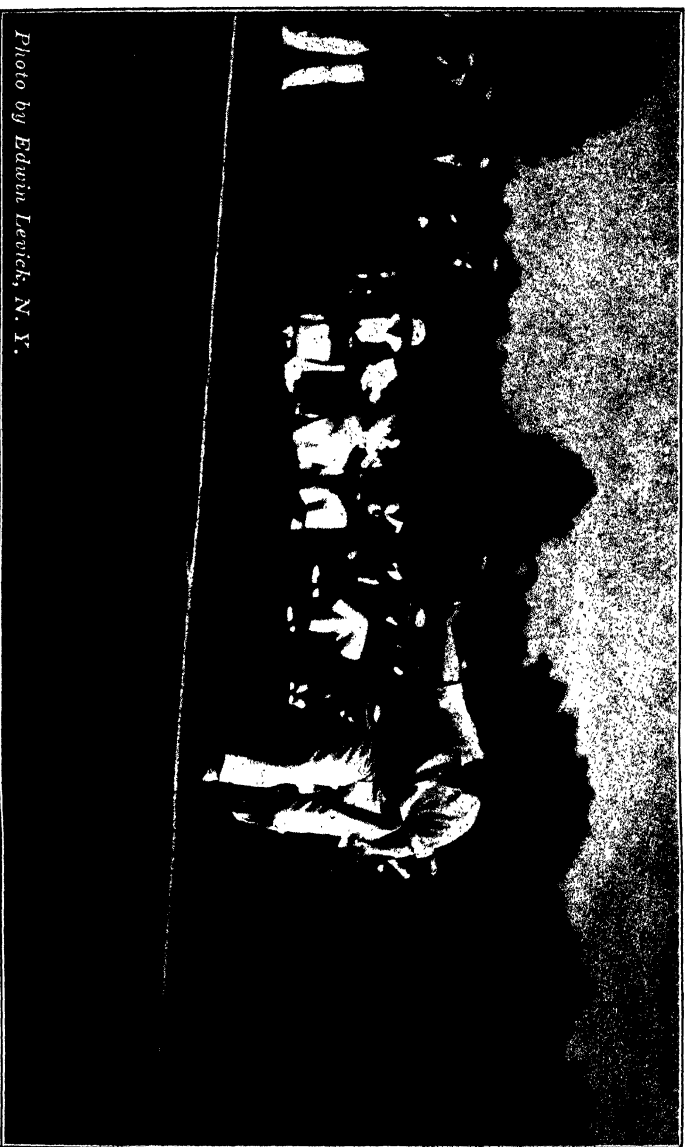


Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

just to play at home against the same players. Never say "Oh, I can't win!" and so be kept from entering tournaments. Even if you do not win, it will improve your game to meet new conditions.

As to discouragement, almost every player, especially one keenly ambitious, goes through its stages as his game develops. It is at such times that the player must get the firmest grip on himself, and not allow this feeling to pull him down. As a matter of fact, in most cases, the feeling is without foundation and entirely a mental obsession. The man is convinced that months have passed with no sign of improvement. In reality, an improvement is going on of which he is unconscious. Therefore, if he hangs on with tenacity of purpose, he will sooner or later be rewarded. Let the average player form the habit of studying his own strokes and the results they are bringing, always with the view of building up his weaknesses. A stroke that very aptly illustrates that the above advice is not generally followed is the overhead smash, with which I have already dealt. A countless number of players, including those of first-class ability, are perceptibly weak in this particular stroke. They have neglected it in their practice. In tourna-

BACKHAND—XIII

The camera has caught Pell at the finish of one of his severe backhand drives. A study of this photograph brings out one or two interesting points. For ideal position his feet should be a little further apart, that is, the right advanced more toward the ball and more weight might be on that leg. But this is another one of those cases where in actual play so often there is no opportunity to perfectly set yourself. The follow-through here plainly indicates that he has played this shot across court with considerable angle, as the finish is so far across in front of his body and off his right side. His racket has turned over to an unusual degree which would show that he played the shot with a great deal of "top" for the purpose of holding the ball, causing it to drop quickly. This would not be so necessary if there was not every indication of his having played this stroke at a wide angle and extremely hard as shown by the weight being lifted almost entirely off the ground by the force of his powerful swing.

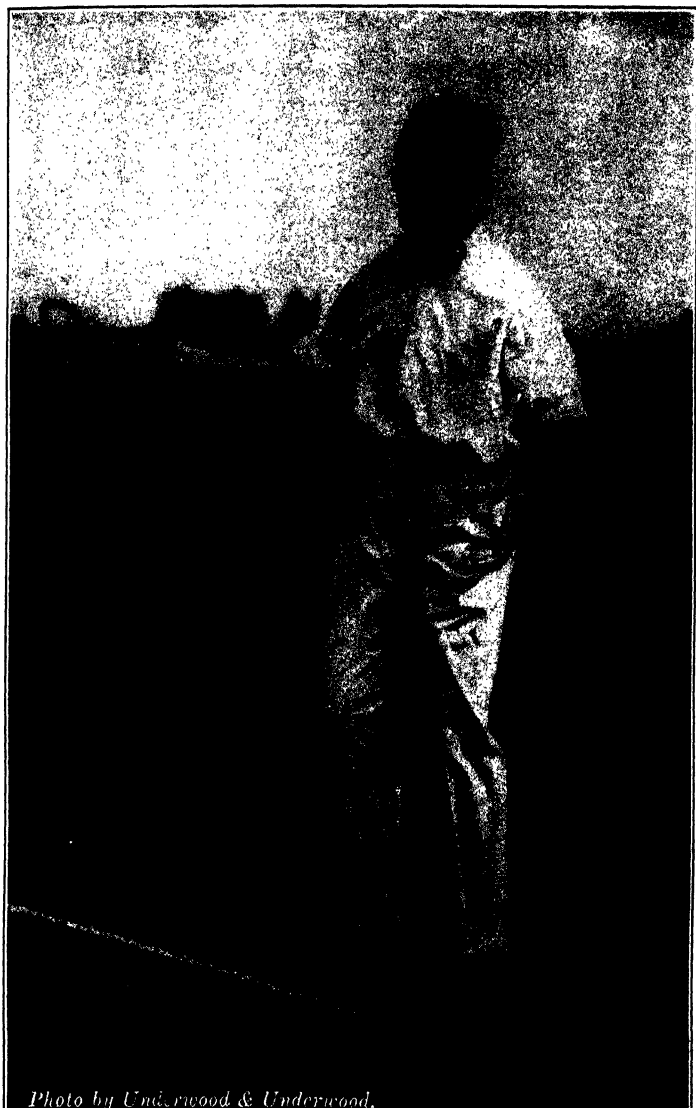


Photo by Underwood & Underwood.

ment play one should form the mental habit of studying opponents as to their peculiar weakness and strength. As to smoking and drinking,—these two most common forms of stimulant certainly affect the player and his tennis. (I now have in mind the player who is getting ready for match-play, and do not feel that the subject of training need be dealt with at all in connection with him who plays entirely for fun with no idea of tournament competition ahead.) But take the case of an excessive smoker—I should hesitate to advocate that he necessarily entirely give up this habit before a tournament. If he can do so without feeling any undue reaction from the want of the accustomed stimulant it is far better for his wind and condition. If he can not do so, it is, at least, imperative for him to materially cut down his usual amount of smoking. In this connection much depends upon the individual, the personal equation, because the reaction varies with different people when habitual smoking or drinking is suddenly lessened. Personally, I feel that my own conditioning for a tennis match is made easier by the fact that I do not indulge in any form of artificial stimulant. Consequently, the extent of my training, if applied to a player who does,

BACKHAND—XIV

I have included this picture, feeling that perhaps as much can be gained from an illustration of what not to do as from those that always show correct positions. From the point of view of body balance and position this snapshot certainly is a striking example of everything as it shouldn't be, and I hope my readers will profit by it. To be anywhere near correct my right foot at this moment should be a step forward instead of tangled behind my left, and by now I should be transferring my weight from the left onto the right. The only redeeming feature about the picture is that my racket arm seems to have gone through freely, which would be unusual from such a position. The picture shows the angle at which I incline the racket-head toward the ball just after impact.

FIGURE 54

VOLLEY—I

With Figure 54 in mind, I may open these volley pictures with another illustration of tennis misfortune. This is an anxious moment at the net during one of my matches on the centre court at Wimbledon, England, in 1913. I have anticipated the shot wrong and my opponent has played the ball by me for a clean pass. I have turned in time to watch it land and the camera has caught me in the act of wishing the side line would be nearer to me than the ball when it struck. A short section of the service line may be seen at the extreme left of the picture and from that it may be judged that my volley position here was about ten feet inside of it.

FIGURE 55



FIGURE 55

might fall short. However, I will relate one or two of the principal points about training that I look out for.

As already stated, my form of diet is a very simple one, and care is exercised as to the combination of food taken at the same meal. Owing to the fact that the principal tournaments are played in various localities, I am always very careful about drinking-water. It is not so much that the water at a given place is bad; much more is it the change of water from some previous place that upsets the stomach. To avoid this constant change, I drink a standard bottled water that is sold everywhere.

My tennis in recent years has been distinctly seasonal. During the winter months, I allow my game to utterly go out of practice, which necessitates a reconstructive process every spring preparatory to the summer tournaments. This process involves for the most part a gradual training of the eye and the bringing of the muscles back into the required state of activity and flexibility which they naturally lose through the inactive winter months. Each year I must train myself anew, both mentally and physically, up to a concert pitch. It is only by this general method that I feel I can reach the greatest

VOLLEY—II

The purpose of this photograph is to show my forehand low volley position. At the same time I want to bring out one or two points about the low volley which I am a firm believer in and feel are of utmost importance in acquiring some command of this very difficult stroke. One of the most important of these is the necessity for *getting down* to the ball, at the same time maintaining absolute poise in this crouched position. The most essential reason for this "getting down" to the ball is to maintain, whenever possible, the horizontal racket. By this method, I have found that you can acquire a great deal more control of the low volley in every way. In all low volleys the weight should be well forward. On the forehand side the left foot should be well in advance of the right and the left leg sustaining most of the weight. This picture shows the position of the racket at the moment of impact, and you will notice its face is slanted back, the lower edge being nearer the ball for the purpose of elevating the return sufficiently to clear the net, as, of course, all such volleys are made considerably below the level of the tape, and it is the necessity for raising the volley just high enough to clear that makes it such a difficult stroke to master. The photograph very clearly shows my grip for this stroke, so I will not enlarge upon that except to call attention to the fact that it is about an inch further up the handle than I take it for a service or a drive.

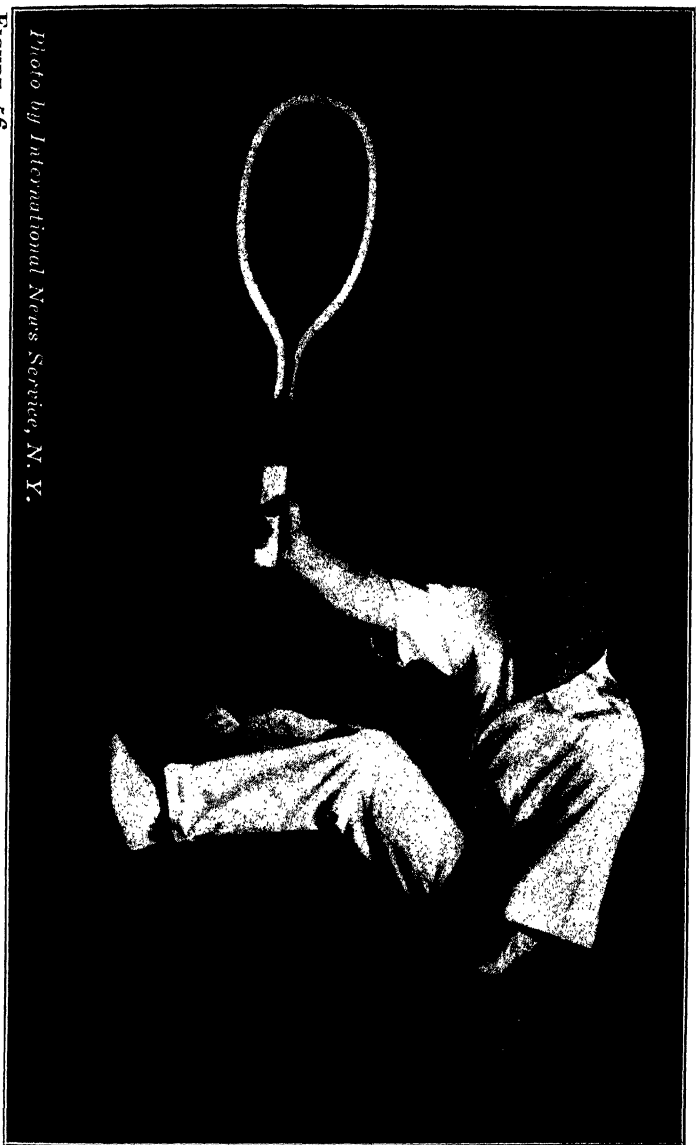


Photo by International News Service, N. Y.

heights of my game. Such a plan could not have been possible a few years ago when my game was more in the constructive stage. Then more continuous play was needed, as a lay-off for a period of months would tend to retard development. It is only after one's game has rounded out that a long rest can be taken and the loose threads picked up again with a few weeks' practice. This, in part, explains why a youngster develops faster in an all-year-round climate like that of California. He is enabled to play more continuous tennis when his game is at the constructive stage.

Here are some of my most vivid impressions as I look back a few years to that time. Primarily I had an unbounded love and enthusiasm for the game. I felt, and still do in fact, that it was the greatest of all outdoor games, and I had tried them all as boys will. Discouragement? I should say so! Once I was convinced that I stood stock-still in my game for two years. Afterwards I found I was mistaken, for improvement had been working silently. The greatest factor that carried me over such obstacles was that my enthusiasm for the game never slackened. I never ceased to enjoy playing, al-

VOLLEY—III

Figure 47 was a pose-picture of the low backhand volley and here we have a snapshot of real serious action illustrating exactly the same stroke. The picture was made on the famous centre court at Wimbledon, England, and a glimpse may be had in the background of the audience that filled the permanent stands constructed on all four sides of this court. The ball was evidently a mean one to reach and may be seen just coming onto my racket, which is faced well back to give it elevation on the return, as I haven't a hope at the limit of my reach like this of doing any more than meeting the ball squarely and firmly. Notice that even in an extreme case such as we have here I have kept my body well down to the ball and maintained a horizontal racket as near as was physically possible.

An interesting feature in the equipment of this court may be seen lying along the ground in the centre background against the green baize enclosure. It is in the form of an immense canvas tarpaulin, which is spread over the court enclosure in a very unique manner to prevent the rain from drenching this invaluable stretch of turf. When rain threatens, the canvas, which is rolled up along the side, is quickly stretched across the court and fastened to a steel cable running from end to end down the middle of the court enclosure; the cable is fastened over two temporary posts that are quickly erected at either end, and is stretched taut by means of a windlass, and thus the tarpaulin, which is also fastened at the sides, is raised completely clear of the turf and constitutes a waterproof tent over the entire court area.



FIGURE 57

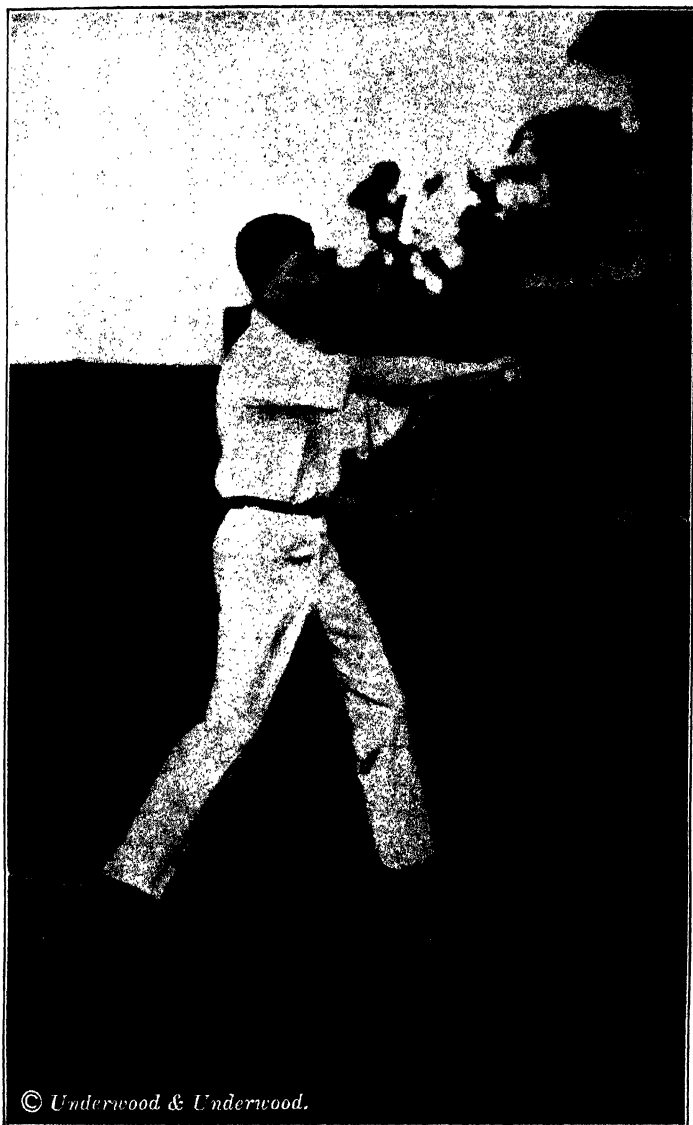
though at the time I was positive I had ceased improving forever.

I should say that it was about the time I began winning some of the tournaments among the boys that my ambition was born to become a real player. By these boyish tournaments, I was gradually educated up to regular tournament play; consequently I can not recall any severe case of stage-fright. Naturally my first match against a first-class player in open tournament is very clearly defined in my memory, however; and, in recalling that match, I do not find myself the most composed youth in the world. I remember more keenly that the great southern player, Bell, looked as big as a mountain over on the other side of the net. The greatest friend I had in my youthful tennis days was Sidney R. Marvin, to whom I have gratefully dedicated this book.

During a tournament season I am always careful in regard to rest, averaging between eight and nine hours' sleep. Between all matches I am a great believer in utter relaxation. I rise between eight and nine and have a fairly hearty lunch about two hours before I am going to play. During tournament week I do not swim or take any other tiring outside exercise. In preference,

VOLLEY—IV

The ball has come so that I did not have to move in order to reach it, which accounts for the spread apart position of the feet and the equal distribution of weight on either one. Since it came a trifle to the left side of my body I naturally volleyed it with a backhand. The most important point the picture brings out is the one that I have already emphasized before—that of the wrist and forearm being well behind the racket handle, and the horizontal racket. In fact, the horizontal racket position for most volleys below the level of the shoulders is typically an American method and is found less generally in other countries.



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FIGURE 58

I drive and walk and loaf. I keep away from too much tennis talk and think of other things. Sometimes I do a little motoring or motor boating also, or ramble along the sea shore. I have no rigid rules for keeping in tennis shape, either before or during a tournament. The best rule is to be natural and simple in one's tastes. On the average, during a hard season, muscular relaxation is easier to acquire than mental. Yet one is just as essential as the other. Therefore, it is well, when the strain has been continuous, to occasionally seek an environment utterly foreign to tennis yet in no way injurious to it. By this method you obtain a mental as well as a physical relaxation and rest.

My study of an opponent is for the most part confined to the actual progress of the match. I endeavor to adapt myself as quickly as possible to his game, ferreting out his principal points of strength and weakness. Once these impressions are formed and rooted in regard to a certain player, he is catalogued in the mind, and upon meeting him again not nearly the same amount of study of his methods is required. Therefore it appears that the greatest amount of study of an opponent comes when he is a player you have never met before. Never was this borne in upon

me more keenly than when I played in the English championships. There every opponent's game was totally strange and each day I had to adapt myself to a new style, quite a trying test, as any player who has been through a similar mill will testify. As to tennis sportsmanship, remember that you are in it for the sake of the sport. Always play the game as you would have the other fellow play it.

It is pretty hard to define in just so many words what the true tennis form is to which we all aspire. It does not necessarily mean a fixed standardized style, for two totally different styles may be equally true to form. To possess true tennis form, one must have the ability to make all his shots with a natural ease, a full, free, easy swing,—and above all make his shots from the correct position. By that I mean the feet should be so placed and the body weight so distributed that every shot is a perfectly natural one and carries with it no awkwardness or cramping of swing. Of course, in using the words “all his shots” and “every shot” I make exceptions in the case of strokes from your opponent that force you completely out of position. A player with true tennis form is always a graceful one and makes his strokes with apparently no effort.

Our present national champion Williams' tennis is played in almost perfect form.

By all means should one try to learn good form before getting into match play. I know of several players who developed faults in form that became ingrained and spoiled their future as cracks. These men were invariably those who never have given any thought or time to the subject of form as applied to their own strokes. The player who has good form with no drive or effect to his game, and never gets past the "parlor" stage, more often lacks either the mental ability or mental ambition to go on improving. In some cases he may be hampered by the lack of physical stamina, but such instances are greatly in the minority. So many players are careless, and, in not being closer students of themselves, allow some flaw to become ingrained. I can remember distinctly, when developing my forehand drive, that I suddenly came to the realization that I had been taking the ball too close to my body, thus cramping my swing and not getting the benefit of the full sweep of the arm and racket. I had been doing this for so long that it was only after the greatest amount of application that I succeeded in correcting the faulty tendency. Un-

VOLLEY—V

The scene is during one of the International Matches against Australasia at the West Side Club, N. Y., in 1913. I have made my volley on the backhand of the return of my service down to my opponent's forehand. Evidently I succeeded in getting sufficient angle and depth on the stroke to warrant continuing on to a close-in net position, with the hope of there cutting off the next return with sufficient effect to win the point.

The ball seen in the centre of the picture is one that was left carelessly on the court before the point was played. This is a very dangerous habit and is quite prevalent in practice games. When a ball left lying in the court is stepped on in running a badly sprained ankle is very likely to result.

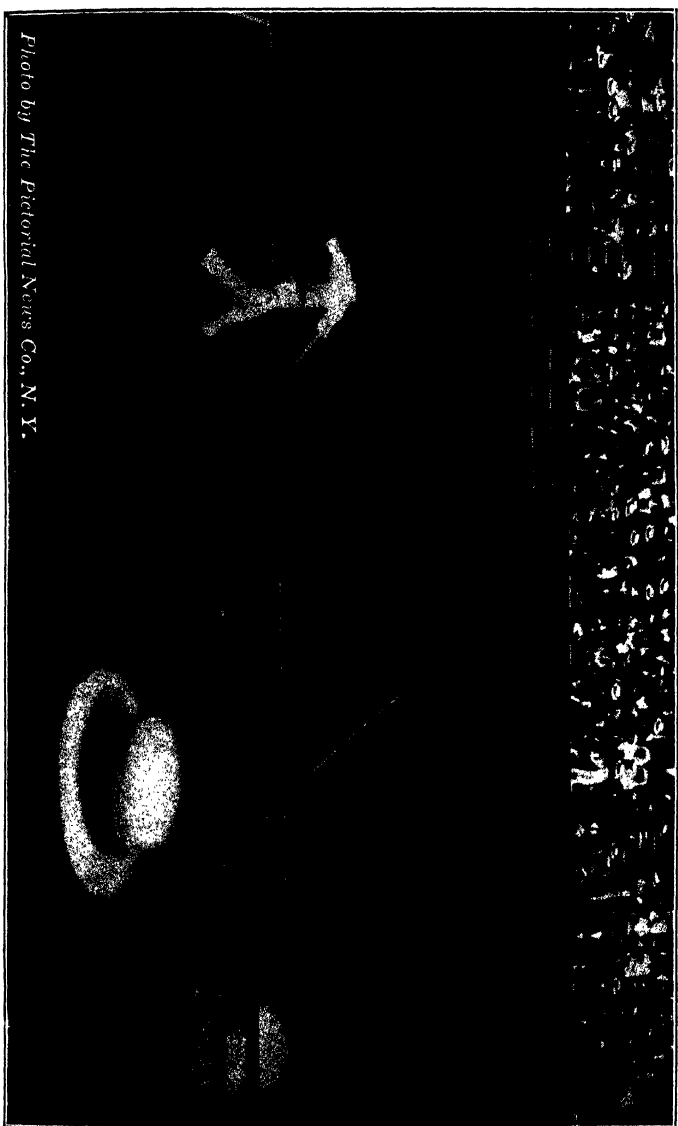


Photo by The Pictorial News Co., N. Y.

doubtedly it would be harder for men who began playing later in life to eradicate eccentricities than for youngsters. Most emphatically youngsters should *strive* to get perfect form. In the very early stages of my game some of the boys around me sneeringly referred to "McLoughlin" as "trying to play fancy." But I knew in my own mind that my efforts were not for the purpose of acquiring a pretty effect, but to attain the correct method of hitting the ball. At the start I should not advocate spending a long time practising one stroke and then taking up another, as this would be another factor tending to eliminate the element of interest and enthusiasm for the game. It is better to play an all-around game until the various points of strength and weakness develop, and then build up the weaknesses. In closing this section I may mention a friend of mine who has been training his three little daughters scientifically in tennis, believing the game to be one of the best brain and body builders for young people known. He has them practise, play, and read the best literature on the subject. They have examinations and final matches from time to time, and are marked on points. Such is one man's opinion of the

value of tennis in relation to a healthy life, and the incident also illustrates the care that might be well spent in building up each individual's game.

CHAPTER XIII

LADIES' TENNIS

IF so far I have barely touched upon the subject of ladies' tennis, it is not from a lack of respect for the game as played by the gentler sex. Rather I should say that I have mentally regarded the subject as one apart, as a subject that other writers (I refer in particular to the lady contributors to tennis lore) are far more competent to discourse upon. However, perhaps a few observations may not be amiss, for after all the fundamental principles of the game are the same, whether it is played by women or men.

The chief reason why the average lady's game differs so from that of a man is unquestionably a physical one. The vast majority of women players do not possess sufficient strength to hit a ball really hard, or the ability to cover the court with the agility a fast-moving tennis ball demands. I should hesitate to say that it is through lack of ability that the feminine player does not bring

VOLLEY—VI

Williams vs. Wilding in the opening match of the Davis Cup Challenge Round of 1914. Williams has served and, following his service to the net, has volleyed Wilding's return with a low backhand (notice the horizontal racket). It evidently wasn't a very deep forcing service, as Wilding has moved part way into the court toward the net with his return, showing that he was enabled to make a sufficiently offensive shot to warrant his advance to the position as shown here. This, under normal conditions, would be what is known as the "dead line"—the place in the court where you will invariably be caught at your feet and where the very best you can hope for is to play a purely defensive shot. In this instance Wilding is evidently expecting a defensive volley from Williams. If he gets it, the command of the situation is his; if not, then the advantage is distinctly with Williams, owing to Wilding's position as above described.

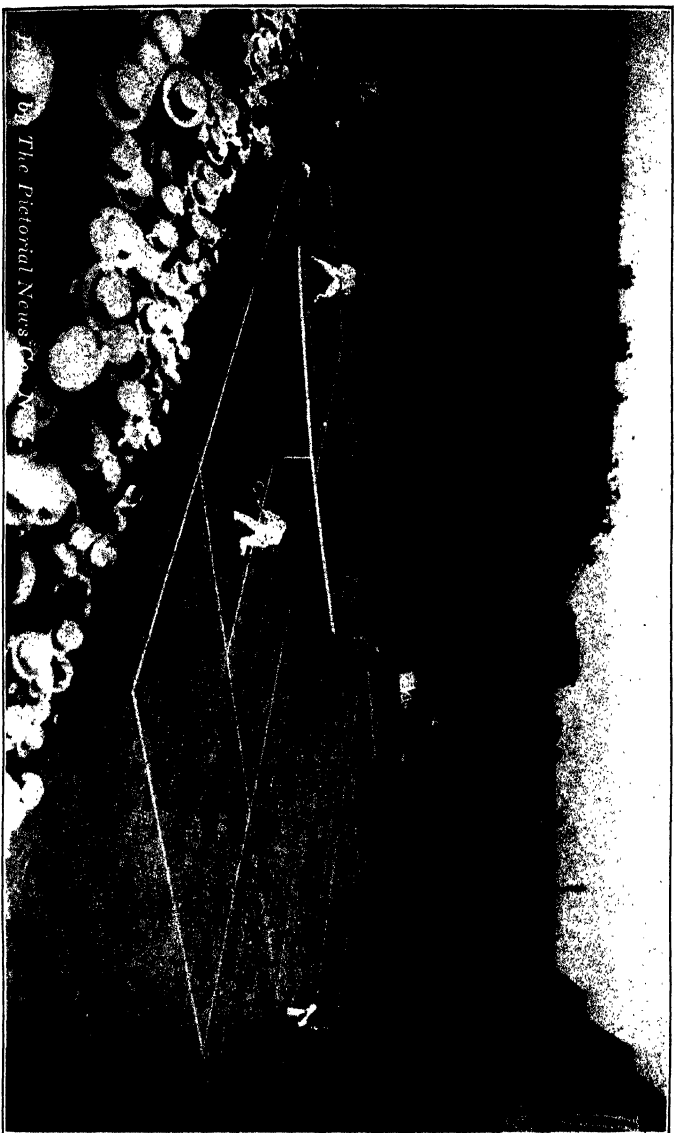


Figure 60

her game up to the masculine standard. It is purely a physical limitation.

Obviously the woman who is blessed with the physique, plus all the other requisites that make up tennis ability, is the one who builds her game most along masculine lines, and so surpasses her sisters in competition. Such ladies are the grand exceptions to the rule and I am proud to state that, so far as America is concerned, California easily leads any other part of the country in having developed the greatest number of these "grand exceptions."

There are various reasons for this; perhaps the principal one is climatic. You will almost invariably find that an equable climate engenders a desire and love for the out-of-doors. So it is at least in California, especially among the ladies, for of course the average woman has more leisure than the average man. What, then, is more natural than that under these circumstances they should build up a strong physique jointly with their improvement and development in tennis skill?

Another reason is that ladies are encouraged more in the game in California than in any other locality I have ever known, possibly excepting England. There is scarcely a tennis tournament

of any importance in California where the ladies' events are not treated as of equal importance with those of the men. This can scarcely be said of any other section of the country. As a result this participation in frequent tournaments has the natural effect of stimulating feminine interest in the game and bringing into ladies' play the added element of that keen competition which is so absolutely essential to the development of a high class tennis player.

And beyond these there is another reason which may further explain the superiority of the California women players. They frequently play with and against the better men players, a matter of invaluable assistance to a girl in the development of her strokes, for she learns to adapt herself to the faster shots of the men, which naturally has the effect of making the strokes of other ladies seem easier to handle. This was certainly true in cases of Mrs. T. C. Bundy (*née* May Sutton) and Mrs. George Wightman (*née* Hazel Hotchkiss), the two greatest women players ever developed on California courts. Needless to say, their fame has long ere this spread far beyond local confines, and we are perfectly safe in saying that each at the height of her game was second to no woman player the world has

ever seen. Both girls were forever playing with the men. Indeed their natural tennis ability soon justified such association, not to mention their attractive personalities, which are relegated to secondary position for the moment as my remarks are confined principally to the tennis aspects of the case. The same thing has been true of Miss Mary Brown, our present National Champion. During the stages of her improvement to a high tennis ranking she moved in approximately the same tennis circle as did Mrs. Bundy, and was also aided materially through the able tuition of her brother Nat, the present National Clay Court Champion in doubles with Claude Wayne.

And finally, learning and developing the game on hard courts has its advantages, as I have pointed out in regard to the men; for a woman's stroke is bound to accumulate speed with frequent play thereon, and her footwork will be appreciably quickened.

Elsewhere I have treated at some length the development of Mrs. T. C. Bundy's forehand. Her mastery there of a distinctly individual stroke illustrates the fact that it is possible for women to attain proficiency in the finer points of technique as well as building their game upon

VOLLEY—VII

The finish of a stroke that comes between a high volley and a smash, representing, perhaps, the hardest hit ball I ever attempt on the tennis court. This shot resembles a high volley in that the ball is taken at a point in the air from which high volleys are made and not sufficiently above the head to allow for an overhead swing. It resembles a smash because the ball is hit hard with a full-arm swing, instead of being blocked back with the usual short, crisp volley stroke. Such a ball as a rule floats up rather slowly, which gives you time to hit it with a full swing, and is taken well out in front of you at a point just above the level of the eyes. You do not hit down on this kind of a ball so much as you do when killing a short lob; the racket slashes horizontally across in front of your body, as my follow-through in this picture shows. For this reason the shot is played much more successfully across-court. It is also one that should never be attempted except when inside of the service line.

The snapshot was made on one of the celebrated courts at Newport, R. I.,—the one next the Locker Building, a portion of which is seen in the background.

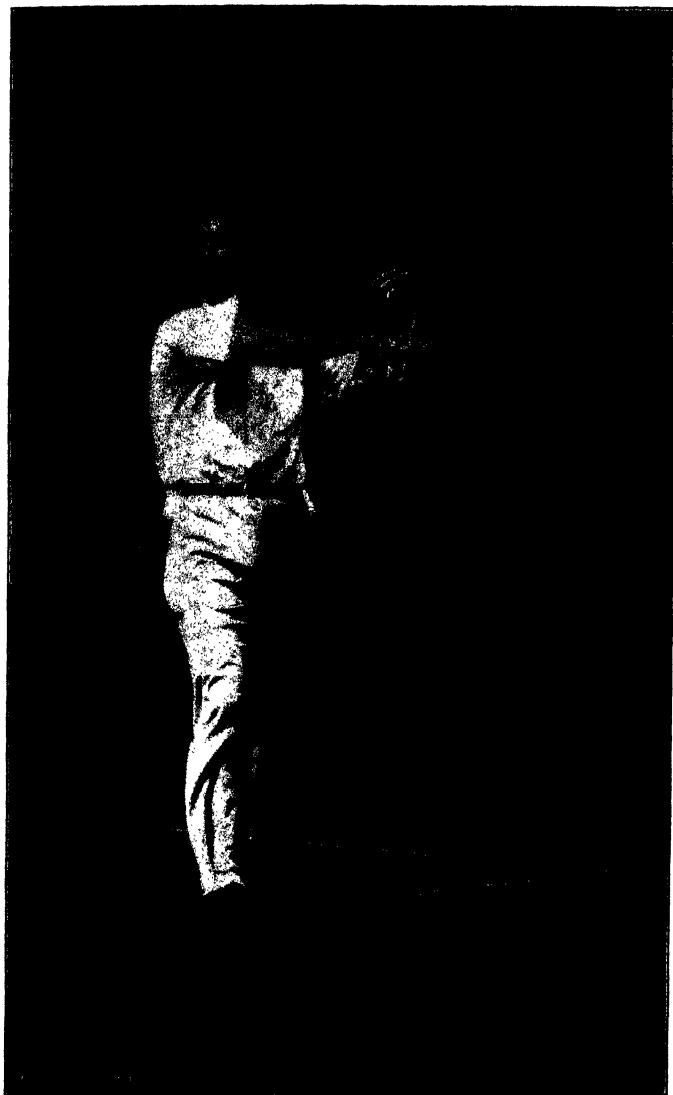


FIGURE 61

a solid foundation. Certain very violent measures resorted to by men, as in the case of the difficult American twist service and the leaping smash, must of necessity remain largely beyond a woman's range, but there is no reason, for instance, why women should not be better volleyers than they are. Setting aside the effort required for continual "running in," the average woman is more chary than the average man about exposing herself to the rapid fire of a rally at the net. I think that, as in the case of a poor masculine volleyer, this can be largely counteracted by constant practice. Familiarity with a hard hit ball at close quarters will rob it of most of its terrors. As the wrist becomes strengthened the realization will follow that any close hard-hit ball may be *met*, at least, even if the return stroke have no very definite intention behind it. The racket will be found an easy protection, in the last analysis, against most chances of the player's being hit; and if the eye is trained constantly and courageously it is astonishing how many close volley shots may be brought off with fair success by merely blocking the ball. And after this idea is mastered the follow-through I have already dwelt on might be added. After all there is some lungeing and running to be done whether the

player is close in or lingering around the base line, and a lady player who acquires some proficiency in "coming in" nine chances out of ten will soon have the "drop" upon her opponent of the same sex.

Just as one naturally cites California in discussing the general topic of ladies' tennis in America, so one thinks of England when turning to the subject of their tennis abroad. Yet we must look for a different explanation of the Englishwoman's marked proficiency, as it certainly is not so largely climatic, nor is the quality of their game due to their play on hard courts. As a matter of fact, their tennis is played almost entirely on grass. Beyond a doubt the lady players of England maintain a higher standard of ability than those anywhere else in the world, and I think the most likely and logical reason for this is the vast amount of tennis that is played in England. Tournaments are held everywhere on good courts, but, what is more important, the women take a keen interest in them, devoting almost all of their leisure in the tennis season to participating in the various events, and they enter with a true tennis spirit. They play more for the sake of the game and less for effect; in other words, it is a matter of greater concern to the

average girl to acquire a forehand like that of Mrs. Chambers than is the question whether a blue or a pink silk sweater sets her off more becomingly upon the court. It is just because so many ladies on the other side adopt this sensible attitude of mind—realizing that what the game holds for them is deserving of more than a mere passing “parlor” interest—that so many excel.

Their style of game is almost entirely a back-court game. In fact, this feature is typical of ladies' tennis in general, for it is in exceedingly rare instances that one sees the net game anywhere near successfully developed in a woman. To a certain extent physical limitation enters in to explain this. Of the great players I have known in the world, Mrs. Wightman stands practically alone as an exponent of net playing in the real sense of the word; the rest are wonderfully proficient in ground strokes. In England, Mrs. Chambers and Mrs. Larcombe stood out most prominently of those I observed. Certainly they have brought the back-court game up to a more marvelous degree of skill than any ladies I have ever seen, with the exception of Mrs. Bundy, who has no equal. Their drives are played in beautiful form with a full-arm swing and a fine “follow-through.” They put no top on the

ball, as Mrs. Bundy does, and so it takes a very straight deep flight, just skimming the net, that is a delight to watch.

Although tennis is such a strenuous sport, it should have many attractive features for the women of the United States. No other game can surpass it for all-around physical development, but it is also a stimulant to mental activity. Considered from the more æsthetic side, it is a graceful game; and a country club's well-kept courts, especially if of grass, furnish the most attractive type of battle-ground. It is a "clean" game, demanding the finest sportsmanship, with no wrangling; and it calls for that concentration of mind to which women have of late laid just claim. May I even be allowed to say that woman has prided herself upon her strategy in the past, and that tennis requires just such a gift? Once let the merely ornamental side of the game lose some of its appeal for the feminine phalanx, and the realization that hard work is a necessity in developing the strokes that "look so easy" take its place, and we shall have a higher average of ladies' tennis in America.

CHAPTER XIV

TIGHT PLACES IN TOURNAMENTS

I HAVE often been asked to recite instances in tournament play where your opponent has you within a "hair's breadth" of defeat when suddenly the tide turns and you are fortunate enough to pull an apparently hopeless situation "out of the fire." In describing the following two or three cases that stand out prominently in my personal experience I do not for a moment wish to reflect any undue amount of credit on myself; for the same sort of thing happens to all match players, and the praise should be equally divided. A recital of a few personal reminiscences may serve to exemplify how aptly one or two of the old adages may be applied to tournament play; such old standbys as "Never say die," and "While there is life, there is hope," and so on. In short the lesson is never to lose your "grip" in a match no matter how badly things are going against you, for a match is never lost until your opponent has scored the last point.

OVERHEAD SMASH—I

The conditions attending an overhead smash are so variable that there really is no set way of executing this difficult shot, which can be set aside and drawn upon as a basis of comparison such as is possible with some of the other strokes with which I have been dealing. For one thing—to further illustrate this point—you must be able to smash a ball with equal facility whether moving forward or backward, yet there is a wide difference in balance and position in making the two strokes, and each may be a perfect smash. On the other hand, in making, let us say, a perfect forehand drive, it is not possible to accomplish such a stroke when moving backwards, at least not by our present recognized standards of perfect forehand stroke-form. In the accompanying photograph, I am smashing the ball from a position over the service line when moving backwards. The ball has just been struck and may be seen as a blurred object just in front of the racket. It will be seen that I have hit the ball when fully extended from off my right leg. This is characteristic throughout almost all my overhead work, and brings out an important point of difference between this stroke and my service, as in the latter my left leg figures most prominently. Notice my grip at the very end of the racket handle as contrasted with that for the forehand volley.



FIGURE 62

This was brought home to me with a vengeance quite early in my tournament experience, and I can remember being well rewarded for "hanging on" in a semi-final match of a big handicap event in San Francisco. My opponent was placed at plus 30, and I was at owe 50, or 4 points behind scratch. When your adversary is not an absolute novice this is quite a load to carry, as any one who has tried it will assure you. We were playing two out of three sets, the first falling to my opponent rather easily. In the next he went into the lead at 5-3. He won the first point of the ninth game and the score stood owe 50-40 against me for match. This meant that I must score seven consecutive points to bring the score to deuce. The loss of any one of the seven points meant the loss of the match. I don't know how, but in some way I managed to pull the game out. The game score now stood 5-4. Out of the frying pan into the fire!—if I didn't go and lose the first point of the next game! Again 40 owe 50 against me for match. Seven more points in a row, in which I could not afford to make a single error!—which meant also that I dare not risk a stroke hard enough for a point winner unless it was a perfect "sitter." It was a case of wait for that "sitter," or for my opponent's error.

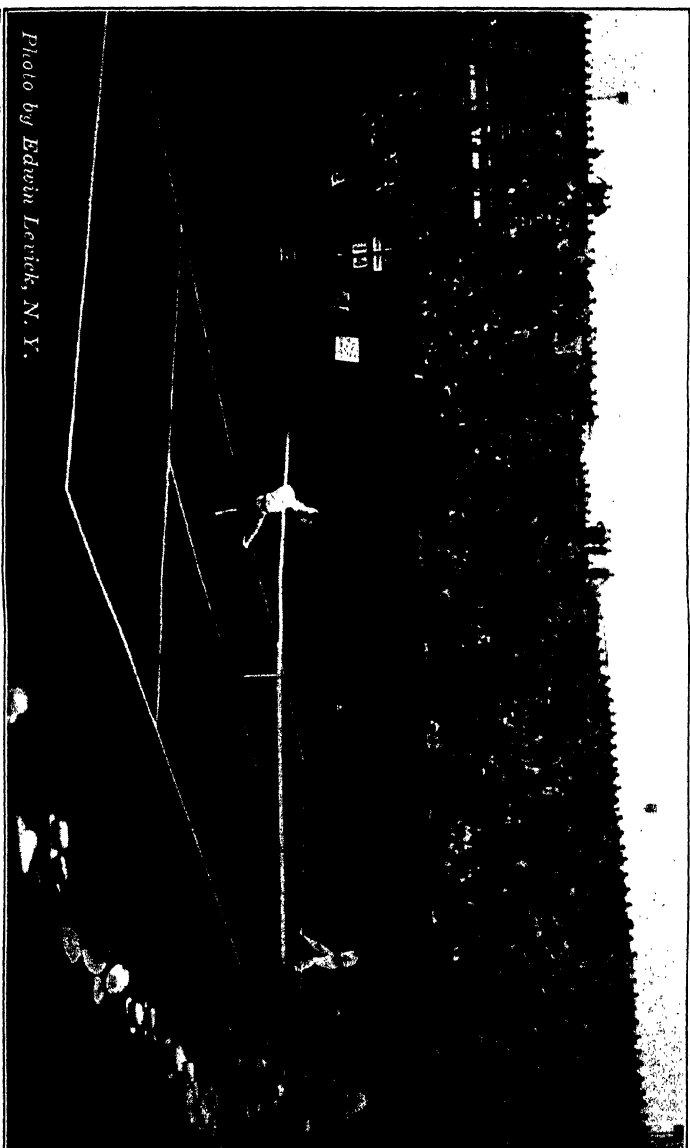


Photo by Edwin Levick, N. Y.

FIGURE 63

It was misery while it lasted. It seemed to take an "age" to pull that second game out of the fire and eventually win the set and match. But I managed to do it. Even in subsequent years during matches of international importance, I have never suffered the mental agony in a "tight pinch" that this match caused me. It practically cured me of handicap play, and I have scarcely ever participated in such an event since.

One of the most stubbornly fought sets, and the longest, that has ever been contested for in an international match was the first between Norman Brookes and myself at Forest Hills, L. I., during the Davis Cup Challenge Round of 1914. Each was winning his service game and each in turn was making a desperate effort to "break through" the other's delivery. The games see-sawed back and forth with neither one successful in coming within striking distance of his opponent, and winning the service began to dominate the set more and more with its importance. Of course, after the four-all mark had been reached, it was for me a case of "do or die," for the loss of my service after that meant the loss of the set, as Brookes was always serving the odd game. We alternated without serious mishap

DOUBLES—I

If this was a picture of an American team it would not be particularly worthy of comment, as the parallel position in doubles is a formation that has long been identified with American methods. It is Brookes and Wilding, however, the strongest doubles team in the world, and it is very seldom that you find them thus, that is in parallel position back of the service line. The finish of Wilding's racket shows that he has evidently played an overhand shot, probably off a high bouncing ball, and, together with Brookes, who is wearing his usual cap, is following the return in to the net. The scene of this photograph was in the Davis Cup Challenge Round of 1914 against Bundy and myself.



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FIGURE 64

until eight-all. Brookes then served the next game with his usual success. At 9-8 he was the means of bringing the score to 40-love in his favor on my service. It looked as though the "break" had come at last, for I surely was in a "tight place." It was a case of unlimber all I knew about serving plus a few things I didn't know, such as whether he would take the necessary one of the three consecutive points that I sadly needed to make it deuce. At this point the situation as it appealed to me could be described under three heads in the order of their importance. I hoped to serve well enough—had to!—either, first to win the point outright, or, second, force him into error; or, third, at least cause him to play his first return of service defensively. I should have to consult written records to describe the exact sequence of points after 40-love. At any rate the "break" seemed to come my way, and a few minutes later the game score was lustily called nine-all by the umpire. Vague hopes were realized!

I certainly wished never to be subjected to that strain again. However, I soon discovered that you cannot reckon without your host, for at 14-13 in games Brookes, by a magnificent effort, again went into a 40-15 lead on my service. Prac-

DOUBLES—II

Wilding and Brookes are here seen in action in their doubles match against Parke and Mavrogordato in the Davis Cup Finals of 1914 in Boston, Mass., where Australasia defeated England. Wilding is smashing a lob, in the foreground, and the indications are that he is going to hit it from off his left foot, which is by direct contrast to my own method that I have already described. Wilding has backed up for this lob from his position at the net where he was stationed, while Brookes was receiving the service. Brookes' return has forced the ball to be played up defensively to Wilding, whose racket is just about to flash up onto the ball.

Wilding is an exponent of this straight-arm type of smash referred to in the text. His posture just before the stroke clearly indicates such a shot. His arm will come through with a full sweep but minus the free-wristed whip that some of us use. Wilding isn't near as deadly with this style of smash as Beals Wright, but he is exceedingly accurate and sure. Therefore, no one ever finds a vulnerable point in his armor by persistent lobbing.



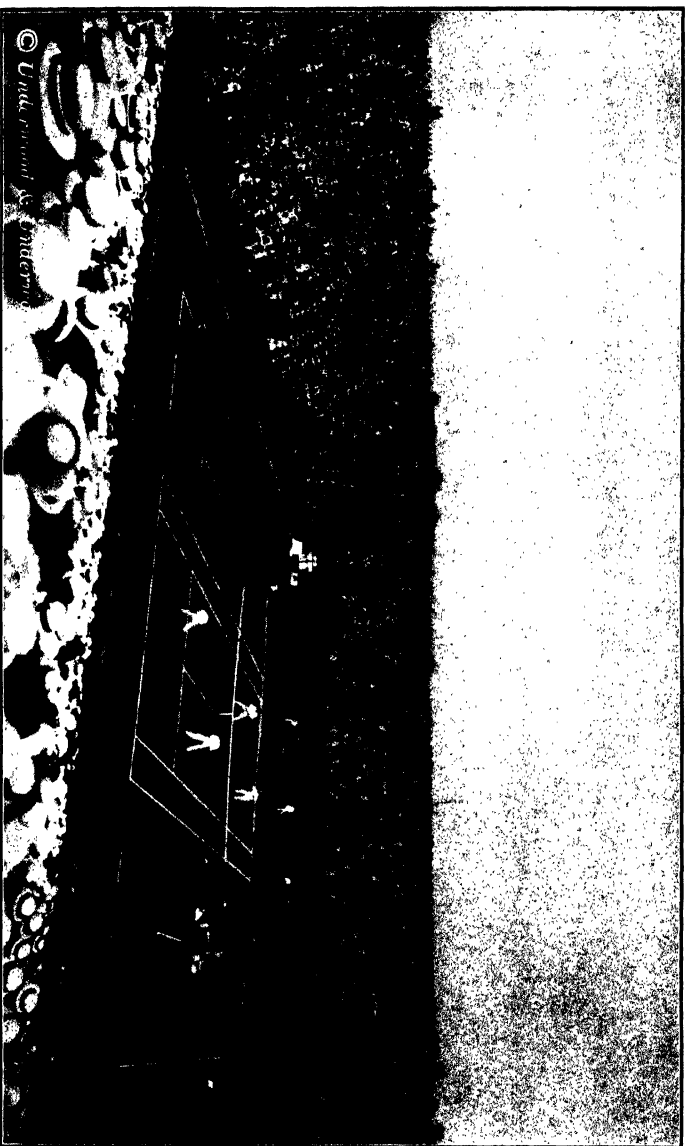
Photo by Edwin Smith, N. Y.

tically the same problem faced me as before—a trifle less severe, perhaps, as I had to win two points in a row as against three before to make a deuce, thus giving me a chance to save the set. By this time the first set had assumed even greater proportions than a mere servers' battle. It was proving such a tremendous drain on both physical and nervous energy that both of us began to realize the loss of it would give a great deal more advantage to his opponent than the average first set does in a match of this kind. The psychological effect would be tremendous. The number of games was counting up to the equivalent of three full sets, and the strain was much greater than three sets would involve, because the play was continuous. Consequently, it is not difficult to picture my hearty relief when "good fortune" once again came across to my side of the net after that 40-15 lead and thereafter remained a more constant companion throughout the match, after the memorable first set had culminated at 17-15.

The most dramatic "tight place" in my humble career occurred during the critical stage of the Davis Cup Challenge Round against England at Wimbledon, in 1913. Judging the particular

DOUBLES—III

This photograph gives a very good idea of the court enclosure at the West Side Club at Forest Hills, Long Island, where the Davis Cup Challenge Round was played in 1914. The players are Brookes and Wilding in the foreground against Bundy and myself on the other side of the net. The position of the former pair illustrates the Australian and English formation in doubles on the receive of service. Wilding is seen standing well within the service line in the right foreground, while Brookes is receiving Bundy's service. Brookes evidently didn't have time to close all the way into the net on the first return and has stopped just short of the service line to play his second shot, which he will make every effort to keep low to prevent our having the down stroke and to permit his reaching the desired net position.



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Figure 66

point of which I am about to tell by the way things finally worked out, the fate of the cup hung in the balance. By a different issue to one little contested point the famous trophy might never have crossed the water to America's shores, and we should never have seen the great series of international matches in 1914. Small wonder that this point should be considered dramatic, especially with its attendant circumstances!

According to the matches that were already won and lost, the cup depended on the doubles match, as has often happened before. Barrett and Dixon, one of England's greatest doubles teams since the Doherty brothers, were opposed to Harold Hackett and myself. They led us two sets to one, and had five-three in games against us in the fourth set. Principally through heroic work on the part of my partner, we were able to win the next game on their service. The score was then four games to five against us with my next service. This game was very closely contested and the score reached deuce. During the ensuing rally a rather short lob came up to me which I hit with full force, shattering my racket through both shoulders and causing the ball to hit the net. (I have always felt convinced in my own mind that if my racket had not broken

on that smash, the ball would have gone true.) The score was now advantage-out—point set match. Naturally I had to take up a new racket with which to continue, and Barrett and Dixon, like the two fine sportsmen they are, permitted me to hit a couple of balls before serving the next vital point. We took our positions after a brief moment; everybody held their breath; you could hear a pin drop among the seven thousand people that surrounded the court! The change of rackets affected my first service, causing it to go wild. One ball left on which to pin our faith! I served it to Dixon's backhand with the idea of compelling a defensive return. Dixon, on the other hand, was extremely anxious to use his forehand to administer the "*coup de grace*," and, fortunately for us, attempted to run around this service. He did not have quite time to get sufficiently around for an offensive forehand position, which caused the rather weak defensive return we needed so badly. The shot floated up to my forehand, high and rather slow. Again I let go at it hard, but this time my racket did not break. We seemed to have successfully passed the one great crisis, for after that we were never again in serious danger of losing the match.

CHAPTER XV

TENNIS TRAVELS

IN a rapid survey of tennis around the world, the most noteworthy fact that arrests me is the condition and progress of the game in Australasia. More than any other country they owe their development and their wide spread interest in the game to the Davis Cup, which was the institution of international tennis. Prior to the time that Brookes and Wilding brought the cup home in 1907, tennis was practically a dead issue in the island domain. During the four subsequent years that Australia held the cup against all invaders, the game grew rapidly,—indeed it fairly took the country by storm. A large and powerful association sprang into existence that controlled the tennis of the country, and keen interest was taken in the innumerable tournaments that were sanctioned. Together with the many tennis clubs formed in all cities and towns, hundreds of private courts were also constructed. Brookes and Dunlop, two of the most famous

players, both have beautiful courts of turf in the grounds of their own residences. On my first visit I was immediately impressed by the attitude of the Australian crowds. The absolute impartiality that they show is remarkable. During the Davis Cup matches in 1909, it actually seemed at times that they were even pulling for the Americans. The high standard of sportsmanship among the players is another striking feature. After the more serious tennis was over, we were invited to visit some people on a cattle station about fifty miles inland from the coast-line railroad. Even in this remote locality, we found not only a private tennis court but also quite a flourishing tennis club in the little town nearby. It was on this private court that we developed a style of service unknown before or since. It was dubbed the "fly service" on account of the tremendous quantity of flies that filled the air at the time we were trying to play. When one came up to the line to serve, strenuous gyrations with both arms were necessary just before the delivery in order to get the flies out of one's face and eyes. The service was naturally a ludicrous burlesque! We had heard of the number of flies in the back blocks of Australia but little did we imagine that they could

actually interfere with a game of tennis. Another feature of the scenery was the heavy background of jack-rabbits.

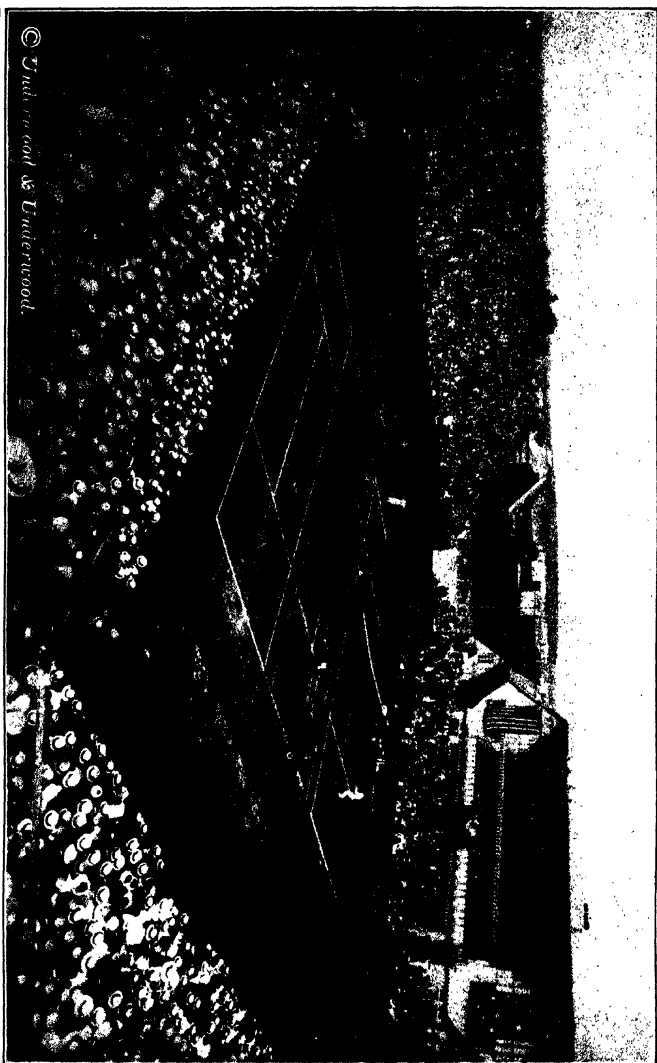
New Zealand has felt a reaction similar to Australia's since the institution of the Davis Cup matches, especially since they rightfully claim 50 per cent. of the honor of bringing the Davis Cup to the antipodes, Wilding being a native New Zealander. You find in both countries courts of grass, dirt, and asphalt. Some varieties of their dirt courts are known as "chip" courts. I was particularly struck in New Zealand by the quality of some of the private grass courts that I saw and played on. One home that I visited in central New Zealand had no less than three almost perfect courts, which were second to none in the land. There are no particularly noteworthy features in which New Zealand tennis differs from the Australian type. The New Zealander's style is about the same, he is the same good sportsman, and we found the New Zealand audiences just as delightful to play before as those in Australia. Throughout our trip in 1911, we were called upon to play a good many exhibition matches at various places. We had a very amusing one in the city of Auckland just prior to our sailing home. Brookes and

DAVIS CUP PLAY—I

A glance at the indicator against the backstop in the left background of the picture indicates that it was taken at four-all in my first set against Brookes in the Davis Cup matches at Forest Hills, Long Island. Some idea may be gained from this photograph of the greatest crowd that has ever been gathered around a tennis court in the world's history of the game. Three consecutive days this huge throng assembled, over twelve thousand each day, and the behavior and sportsmanlike demeanor of this great mass of people left nothing to be desired. They were wonderfully restrained when the occasion demanded and equally so were they responsive at other times.

As to the movements of the players here pictured, Brookes has served and has reached the half-way point in his follow-in to the net. His service evidently was a beauty, for he has forced me completely off balance. The ball is crowding me and completely cramping my swing.

From this bird's-eye position may be gained also a very good idea of the court enclosure and the clever plan on which the courts were laid down in that enclosure. On the first day's play Wilding and Williams played on the court in the foreground, followed by Brookes and myself as here shown. The second day's play, which comprised only the doubles match, was witnessed in the exact centre of the enclosure; the respective side lines of the two single courts here indicated were converted into the two outside lines of the doubles court. A careful scrutiny will show it already dimly laid out. Of course, the lines of the single courts will be erased where they immediately join the doubles court. On the third day's play Brookes and Williams met on the vacant court here in the foreground and Wilding and myself on the court nearest the clubhouse. Run back room for the players was amply provided for both behind the base lines, where we had fully 30 feet, and 20 feet or so at the sides.



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FIGURE 67

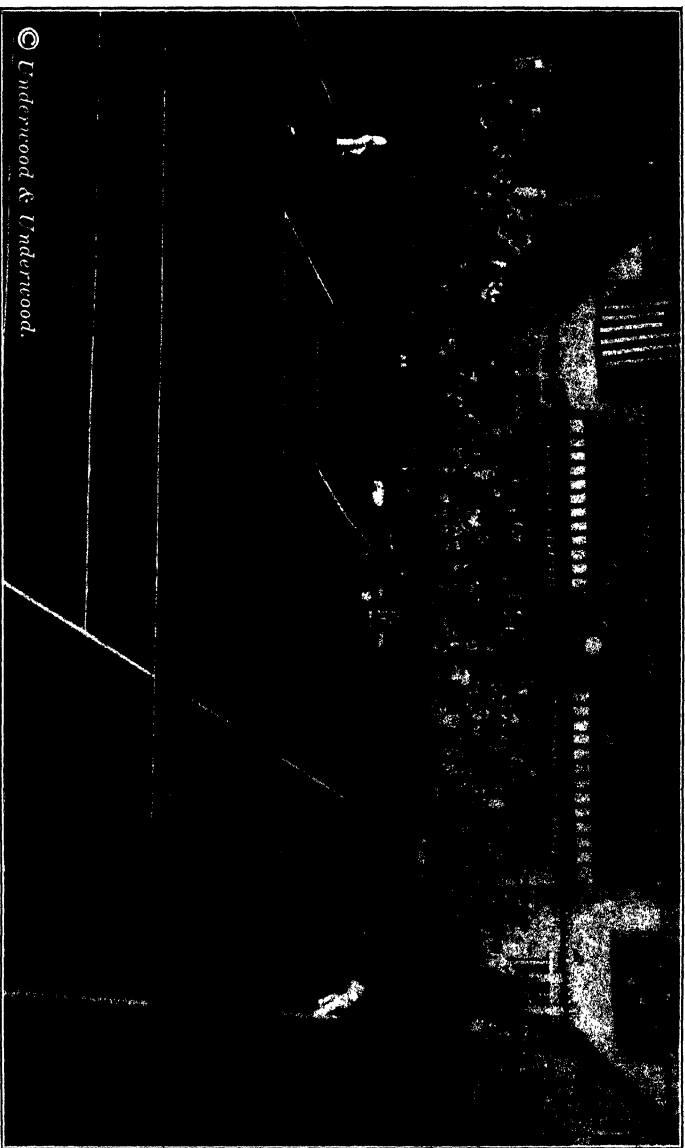
Dunlop were to play Wright and myself. We had scarcely started before the rain began to fall in sheets. Everybody felt good natured and the audience was willing, so we all stuck it out. Before the match was over we were literally splashing around the court, soaked to the skin. Wright had one or two falls which caused much amusement and much splash. The reason I stayed afloat I ascribe to the fact that someone had loaned me a pair of shoes four times too big for me. The displacement and weight of these "boats" was a handy thing on this occasion and kept me on an even keel. We finished the match. Wright and myself were beaten by Brookes and Dunlop. I shall never forget the shower baths that the rotating ball gave us. It was a wet but wonderful experience.

In the mid-Pacific we had two ports of call and enjoyed some tennis at both of them. We played an exhibition match in the town of Suva in the Fiji Islands that I shall always remember on account of the peculiar grass and our unusual ball-boys. The turf was of some tropical variety that was extremely thick, the blades of grass being almost as coarse as bristles. It gave one the feeling of walking on springs. It was wonderfully easy on the players but hardly con-

DAVIS CUP PLAY—II

This was taken during my match against Brookes from the grandstand opposite the West Side Club house in the Davis Cup matches of 1914. I have served, the racket having completed its follow-through, and the first stride to the net has almost been taken. The ball by this time has covered approximately one-half the distance between us, although it can't be distinguished in the picture. In addition to service, it might be well at this point to take note of Brookes' receiving position, which is well within the baseline, thus necessitating his playing the return on the rise, an exceedingly difficult thing to do, which I have discussed in the text.

Some of the linesmen can be seen in the foreground. You will notice two men sitting opposite the baselines over which I am serving. One of these is the regular linesman, the other is delegated especially to call foot faults. He also has a chair opposite the other baseline and changes his position to whichever end of the court the servers happen to be playing from.



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FIGURE 68

ducive to an accurate bound of the ball; in fact it gave a ridiculously erratic bound that increased the humor of the match. Our ball-boys were no less than a pair of huge ex-cannibals with black, bushy hair, who trotted around the court after the balls, wearing very little more than a smile. They did not seem to have the slightest idea of what we were trying to do. Someone had explained in the Fijian tongue that they were to get the balls and bring them back. It made no difference whether we were in the middle of a point or not when they got back, they walked right across the court and handed you the ball with a broad grin. Everybody was good natured, however, and it was great sport. We found tennis one of the mainstays of this small English colony. One or two of the men there played an unusually good game, considering they were so far out of touch with the world.

One other stop in the mid-Pacific was Honolulu. Here also there is keen interest in the game. The courts for the most part are of either dirt or asphalt. It is a surprising thing that there are practically no turf courts there. We found it difficult to stay out of the water long enough to play much tennis, as the surf-bathing

DAVIS CUP PLAY—III

The crucial service game in the memorable first set that Brookes and I struggled over in the Davis Cup matches of 1914. They ran out of figures large enough to be posted on the scoreboard in the background; consequently it became of little use to the audience after we passed the ten-all mark, and they had to depend entirely on the voice of the umpire for the game score as well as the point score. The game score here is 16-15. The atmosphere was fairly tense with excitement, as it was the first time in that long, gruelling set that I had the advantage game with service. Naturally the question in the minds of thousands was, "Will he press home this advantage game to a win of the set?" Dame Fortune smiled and he did!

I am tempted to again call the attention of the reader to my right foot with its relative position to the knee at the moment of impact of the ball and racket. I venture to say that my knee itself is over the line in this picture, although it is hard to tell exactly from the position at which it was taken. But the right *foot* is clearly behind the line, thus rendering me free from any danger of foot faulting.

The photograph also reveals the trials of a linesman, my friend Dean Mathey in this case. Directly behind Brookes he may be seen standing beside the ball-boy with the white hat. He has had to leave his chair because were I to serve down the side line to Brookes' backhand he would have no chance of seeing exactly where the ball struck on account of the likelihood of Brookes' body coming across his line of vision. He therefore must stand out clear in order to gain an unobstructed view of the line.



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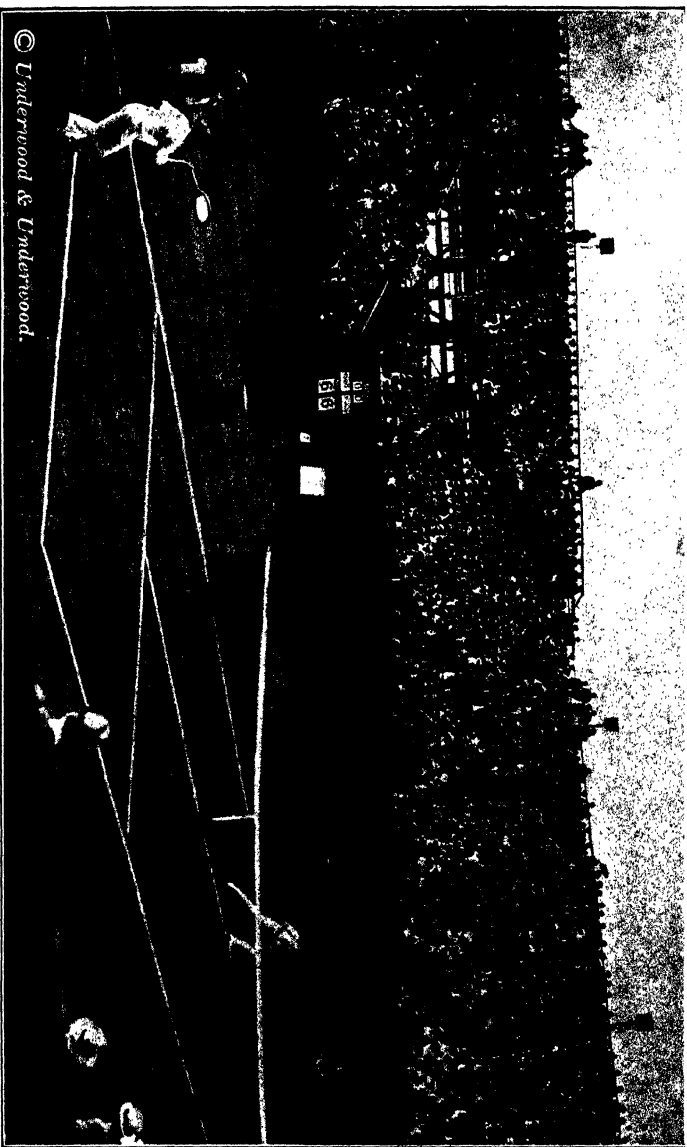
FIGURE 69

is marvelous. Most of the players are American college men who learned their game in this country and have since gone into business on the islands, and some play a very good game. A finer set of good fellows and sportsmen cannot possibly be found. They are all of championship calibre in this respect, if not in their tennis. As a matter of fact I saw very few Hawaiian players and none that had any noteworthy ability.

Japan has experienced a great change in tennis conditions during the past few years, and withal a very material progress in the game. It is only during this time that they have changed from using a light, coverless ball to our present-day felt-covered variety. The use of the former had a very peculiar effect on the strokes. You could hit the ball with terrific impact, which would result in very high snake-like velocity during the early part of its flight, and then it would suddenly die in the air losing all its forward momentum, and dive for the ground. You can see the effect long-continued use of such a ball would have on the strokes of the Japanese. Their strokes developed into vicious slashes at the ball, because no matter how hard they struck it was difficult to hit very much beyond the baseline. Of late years, however, they have

DAVIS CUP PLAY—IV

A scene at Six-all in the first set in my match against Brookes in the Davis Cup of 1914. This picture is quite a valuable study in that it illustrates a very difficult stroke that I have learned and used quite frequently with considerable success against Brookes during this match. It might be described as a concealed lob, as I have gone through the preliminary motion of a forehand drive and at the last moment converted the stroke into a lob. The reason for attempting this was that Brookes, when established at the net, very frequently crowded in close with the intention of decisively cutting off the return for an earned point. Oftentimes, therefore, when my position was a natural one for a forehand drive I would attempt this ruse, for Brookes would naturally be expecting a low fast return and there was every likelihood not only of his close-in net position, but his weight and balance being well forward as well. When this stroke works out perfectly the lob is not of the high, straight variety, but one with a low trajectory that is meant to make recovery doubly difficult by running around.



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Figure 70

changed to standard methods and are developing some very good players. They almost always send representative players down to the Philippines for the championships of the Orient, and last year, if I remember correctly, their best man, whose name I do not recall, took Fottrell, one of our best California players, to five hard sets before he was mastered. The courts in Japan, for the most part, are of clay.

My travels did not take me into France and Germany sufficiently to form any accurate impressions of tennis conditions in these countries. Williams and I had some practice at one of the principal clubs in Paris, where the courts were of clay, and very good. We were there more as tourists than as tennis players, and consequently we did not come in contact with any of the French players. This also applies to Germany. It is strange, but it has so happened that the French players, representing one of the principal tennis nations on the Continent, are the only ones I have not seen or played against. I am told, however, that their style is very like the American, especially in the aggressive features of their play. Up to the time of the war the interest in the game had increased noticeably in France. Some of the most representative Ger-

DAVIS CUP PLAY—V

Williams vs. Brookes in the crucial match of the Davis Cup Challenge of 1914. Williams has served to Brookes and volleyed his return rather short. Brookes is here seen closing into the net after blocking the ball with a low back-hand stroke straight down the line over which he is running. Such a point as this may illustrate wherein Brookes might gain an advantage by his standing well within the baseline to receive the service on the rise, for when his opponent's first volley is the least bit short he is immediately placed in a commanding position to carefully place the shot either straight down or across-court, at the same time closing in with it to the net. The idea is that if he does not succeed in scoring a clean pass he will at least force a defensive volley which will be promptly smothered from his position at the net that he has forced.

This match settled the fate of the famous International trophy for the ensuing year, and the huge crowd, a section of which can be seen in the background, was worked up to a high pitch of excitement in the hope that our lad might unlimber a streak of his super-brilliance and carry his veteran opponent off his feet. This he did do for one set, but unfortunately could not sustain it, and Brookes' game, having never once faltered, was not to be denied. Thus Australasia was declared the champion nation and regained her possession of the famous Davis Cup, emblematic of the world's team championship. The trophy itself may be seen on a table just back of Brookes.



FIGURE 71

man players we met and played against in England, and were very much impressed with their style of game,—especially that of their champion, Freutzheim, whose ground game is wonderfully perfected. The Germans are good net players too, but show a preference for the baseline game. Their strokes have a mechanical precision that is striking. Many little characteristics in their play show that they do not develop their game on anything but hard courts. As a matter of fact, both in France and Germany, I know of no grass courts at all. Their tennis is confined almost entirely to clay. The German style is typical, but an analysis would seem to indicate that they have imbibed certain features from the tennis-playing nations nearby, combining these in a way of their own. At least that is the way their game looked to me. Almost all the Germans that I saw played in very pretty form. The national temperament of a people enters largely into the style of game they favor. The French are very excitable. They play very fast and are apt to “go up in the air.” The German player is very methodical and plays, as I said, with mechanical precision. Germans in general move like well oiled machines, and march to their positions like soldiers.

We took a hurried trip through Switzerland and played a little tennis at Lucerne and Montreux. All through this beautiful country, we found any number of courts, most of them maintained by the hotels. The courts are almost entirely of dirt and have the most picturesque locations I have ever seen, some of them on the tops of mountains, others on the shores of beautiful lakes. One afternoon we played tennis near Montreux, right on the lake shore, and immediately afterward climbed a mountain overlooking the courts, on the top of which we found a hotel where a great many players, most of them Frenchmen, were gathered for a tournament. They welcomed us cordially—especially Williams, whom they knew and were greatly excited over seeing again—and then insisted on our joining them at a round table for dinner. We listened to the accounts of how their tournament up in the clouds was progressing and were sorry to be obliged to leave without seeing any of the tennis.

Beyond a doubt, there is more tennis played in England to the square mile than in any country in the world. The wide spread interest in the game is tremendous, its popularity steadily increasing year after year, yet strange to say

there has not been a corresponding development of the game itself, as in all the other countries. I refer in particular to the evolution of the service and the increasing importance of the net game. The climate of England is especially adapted to the growth of turf; consequently they average a greater number of grass courts of better quality than those of any other country. Because the Englishman's game is entirely built up around ground strokes, we find him remarkably proficient in this department. Not only the first-class players, even those of very average ability possess wonderfully sound ground strokes, or the form that is a foundation for soundness. But the reasons they have not progressed in the game are, it seems to me, first: that they have made no effort to encourage tennis among the younger generation. We know it to be a universal fact that to develop new and better players it is necessary for them to begin the game young. The average English boy is brought up to feel that cricket is the major sport and the only one worth while. Consequently he has developed into manhood before tennis receives his serious consideration. If the time ever comes, and I think it will some day in the future, when the large clubs, schools, and park systems

take a direct interest in encouraging boys' tennis, it will result in a tremendous development of the English game. Then again the English are very methodical and play in an extremely conservative way. There is nothing aggressive or violent about their play. It is well thought out and studiously correct, but lacking in a certain freedom which spells progress.

For how long the war has ruined the sport in Europe, along with far greater devastation, is, of course, beyond prediction. But though Australians and New Zealanders are at the front, the Antipodes themselves are thankfully far removed from the bloody zone, and we may reasonably expect that the game will continue under far better conditions in this one of its natural homes than will obtain even in England after the war. The Australians are a great race of sportsmen. To Australia and to America we may look for the real future of the game for some time to come. And in America the East is certainly the logical tournament territory, being the true tennis centre and the centre of popular interest.

The sporting spirit of America is distinctly favorable to the development of the young player and the fostering of his growth into cham-

pionship material. The National Association shows a splendid enthusiasm and the ability to take infinite pains to successfully stage its tournaments. The healthy activity of the game wins it an ever increasing number of adherents. The outlook could not be more encouraging. And it is pleasant to think that this fine sport has proved another of the many ties to bind Coast to Coast and acquaint Easterner and Westerner with the beauties of the other fellow's playground.

